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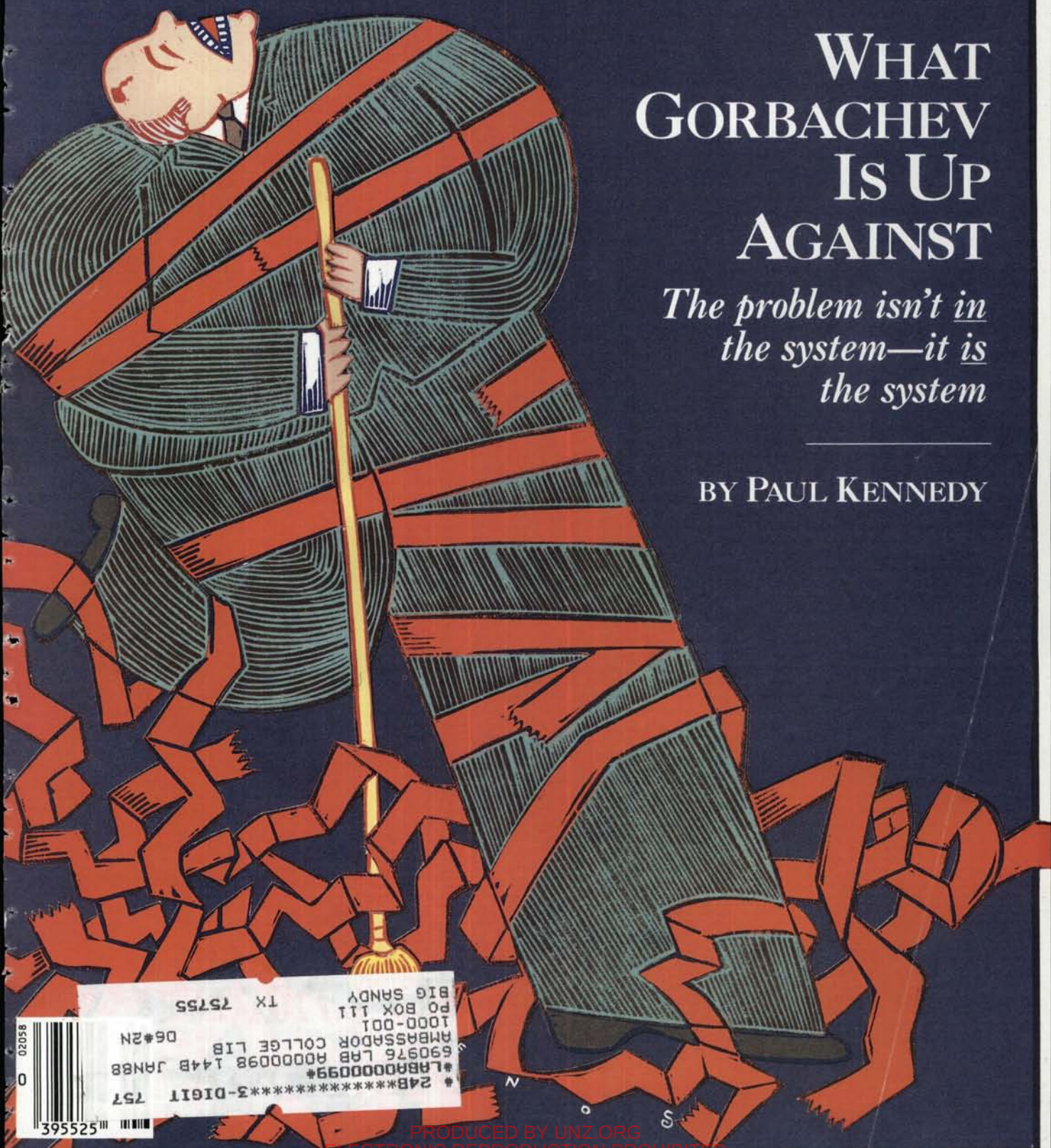
The Atlantic

JAMES FALLOWS ON JAPANESE TELEVISION / HUMOR BY IAN FRAZIER

WHAT GORBACHEV IS UP AGAINST

*The problem isn't in
the system—it is
the system*

BY PAUL KENNEDY



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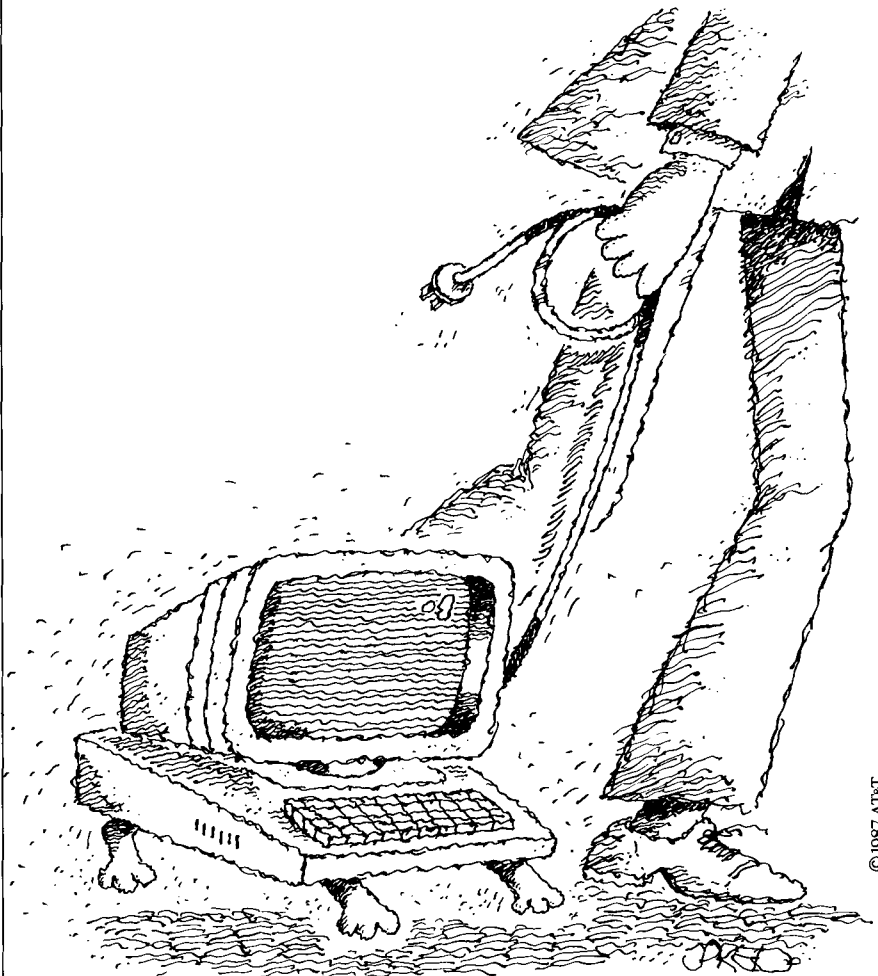
The paradox of power.

The Information Age, for all its potential, has brought with it a new kind of problem. Often, the machines that contribute so much to the flood of information do little to help most of us cope with it. They are difficult to use, rigid in their demands, almost arrogant in their inability to work with any but their own kind. They are the muscle-bound tools of specialists.

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Telecommunity is our goal.
Technology is our means.

We are committed to leading the way.



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Additional information about the awards is available from The Secretariat, The Rolex Awards for Enterprise, P.O. Box 178, 1211 Geneva 26, Switzerland.



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The June Almanac was compiled with the assistance of Gail Cleere and the staff of the U.S. Naval Observatory; Neil Spitzer, an associate editor of *The Wilson Quarterly*; the U.S. Postal Service; the U.S. Centers for Disease Control; the U.S. Weather Service; the Massachusetts Audubon Society; the United Dairy Industry Association; and the National Milk Producers Federation.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

REFUGEE PROBLEMS

In "No Refugees Need Apply," by Claudia Dreifus (February *Atlantic*), Laura Dietrich, of the State Department's Bureau of Human Rights, is quoted as characterizing many Salvadoran refugees' political-asylum claims as "frivolous."

Of the dozens of refugees from El Salvador whose political-asylum cases I have assisted with in central California, I know of only one case since 1980 to which our government responded favorably. It was the case of a woman whose relative was said to have been killed by guerrillas fighting the Salvadoran government. She documented her claim before an immigration judge with a photograph of the dead man, an official government death certificate, and corroboration from the local army commander, who happened to be her uncle.

For the many other Salvadorans facing persecution or death at the hands of the Duarte-façade military-dominated government in that country, an insuperable difficulty hinders their cases: they must document the excesses and abuses of a regime supported by nearly \$500 million a year from the U.S. government. They must, in effect, go to the persecutors and ask them for corroboration of their own illegal violence against civilians, and then present this evidence to an arm of the government that pays the bill while the persecution continues. Their appeals are then turned down, either because their testimony is not credible or because they lack documentation.

GILBRETH F. WHIPPLE
Pacific Grove, Calif.

Claudia Dreifus advocates the admission of more refugee claimants to the United States, but in so doing she ill serves the very people she is concerned about.

Our country features one of the most generous refugee-admissions policies anywhere. We take in more refugees than the rest of the nations in the world combined. And most Americans want the United States to continue this tradition. Toward this end it is essential to protect the integrity of the refugee category and to distinguish genuine refugees from economically motivated migrants

seeking to circumvent our similarly generous legal immigration policies.

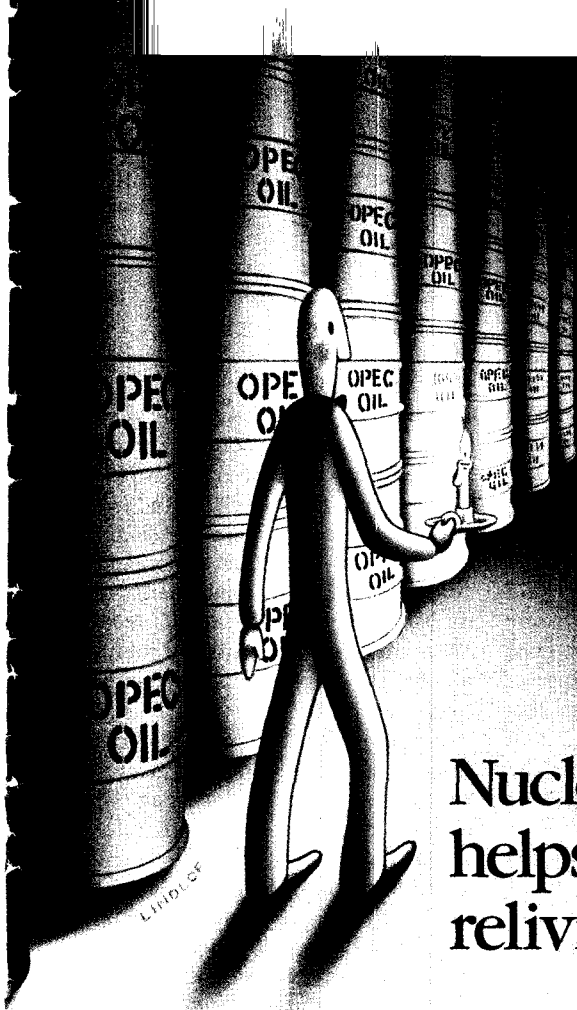
Prior to the Refugee Act of 1980, refugee admissions were determined on an ad hoc basis; national origin and ideology were the fundamental criteria for admissions. The more just 1980 act required the adjudication of individual claims of persecution, regardless of country of origin or ideology. Dreifus seconds the view of the Lawyers Committee for Human Rights, which is in effect that anyone from Central America should be accorded refugee status. But such a position would amount to a return to the discredited national-origins system, and would lead to an untenable situation in which millions of prospective migrants from various Third World countries would clamor for refugee-by-birth status.

Sadly, the inevitable consequence of easing refugee-admissions standards is enormous abuse of the refugee category by middle-class and other economic migrants. This in turn leads to a reaction that sacrifices the interests of genuine refugees desperately in need of resettlement, precisely the scenario that developed in Denmark a few months ago. Most recently, after more than 6,000 illegal aliens from El Salvador living in the United States applied for asylum in Canada during a six-week period, the Canadian response was promptly to abandon the very national-origin criterion advocated by Dreifus, in effect limiting the number of refugees to be accepted for resettlement.

ROGER CONNER
*Federation for American
Immigration Reform
Washington, D.C.*

Claudia Dreifus replies:

Roger Conner confuses regular immigration into the United States, special overseas refugee admissions programs, and the issue of political asylum for refugees who are at or within the U.S. border. Though all involve the admittance of foreigners into the United States, these three categories are governed by different regulations—and even different laws. Supporters of the Reagan Administration's restrictive political-asylum policies have frequently tried to muddy the debate on the asylum issue by toss-



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The 1973 Arab oil crisis is a haunting reminder of the darker side of foreign oil dependence. Since then, America has turned more to electricity from nuclear energy and coal to help restore our energy security. As a result, these are now our leading sources of electricity and a strong defense against an increasing oil dependence that again threatens America's national energy security.

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America imported four million barrels of oil a day in 1985. Last year that increased by another 800,000 barrels a day. The danger? Most of these new barrels come directly from OPEC. And the U.S. Department of Energy estimates that by year-end 1987, oil imports will be

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30% higher than the 1985 level—an ominous trend.

U.S. Interior Secretary Donald Hodel recently warned that "OPEC is most assuredly getting back into the driver's seat" and our increasing dependence will be "detrimental to the country's economic and national security and its financial well-being."

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America's electric utilities have helped diminish OPEC's impact. Today, over 100 nuclear plants make nuclear energy our second largest electricity source, behind coal.

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Nuclear energy for a secure future

Nuclear energy is not just helping here in America. According to OPEC, nuclear energy has permanently displaced about six million barrels of oil a day in world markets.

The lessons we learned in 1973 are lessons we can't afford to forget. Nuclear energy and coal can't offer us guarantees against another oil crisis. But the more we hear about the return of OPEC dominance, the more we need to remember the critical role played by electricity from coal and nuclear energy in fueling America's economy and protecting our future.

For a free booklet on energy independence, write to the U.S. Committee for Energy Awareness, P.O. Box 1537 (OP18), Ridgely, MD 21681. Please allow 4-6 weeks for delivery.

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ing about, as Mr. Conner does, the specter of "millions of prospective migrants from Third World countries," clamoring "for refugee-by-birth status."

My piece was about how *one clause* of the 1980 Refugee Act, the political-asylum clause, has been politicized and distorted in its implementation. I reported that many experts believe that the State Department and the INS have used political-asylum procedures to make foreign-policy points—a distortion of the original "nation neutral," "ideologically neutral" goals of the 1980 Refugee Act.

Moreover, these experts charge the government with often requiring an unreasonable show of evidence to prove "a well-founded fear of persecution," the requirement for winning political asylum.

As Mr. Conner says, this charge has been made by the Lawyers Committee for Human Rights. It has been seconded by the Republican senator Arlen Specter, the Democratic congressman Peter Rodino, the United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees, and, now, six justices of the U.S. Supreme Court.

On March 9, by a vote of 6–3, the High Court ruled in the *Cardoza-Fonseca* case that the Reagan Administration had indeed been overly restrictive in defining "the well-founded fear of persecution." Said the Court: "Our analysis of the plain language of the Act, its symmetry with the United Nations Protocol, and its legislative history lead inexorably to the conclusion that to show a 'well-founded fear of persecution,' an alien need not prove that it is more likely than not that he or she will be persecuted in his or her home country. We find these ordinary canons of statutory construction compelling, even without regard to the longstanding principle of construing any lingering ambiguities in deportation statutes in favor of aliens."

Justice Blackmun in his concurrence was particularly angry about what the INS had done over the years: "The well-reasoned opinions of the Court of Appeals, that almost uniformly have rejected the INS's misreading of statutory language and legislative history, provide an admirable example of the very 'case-by-case adjudication' needed for the development of the standard. . . . The efforts of these courts stand in stark contrast to—but, it is sad to say, alone cannot make up for—the years of seemingly purposeful blindness by the INS, which only now begins its task of developing the standard entrusted to its care."

IMPORTANCE OF PLAY

Children of about two years old still have such frail symbolizing powers that in pretend play, the object representing must replicate the object represented. These babies would therefore certainly require toy guns to facilitate the sort of aggressive play Bruno Bettelheim defends in "The Importance of Play" (March *Atlantic*). But older children can fight battles just as genuine with well-shaped sticks or long blocks representing firearms; and when they tire of shooting, the toys leave many options for other sorts of pretend play.

In light of his fine description of parental vesting in toys such as homemade blocks or well-chosen dolls, why would Bettelheim urge parents to overcome their negative biases and buy toy guns for their children? While his defense of the need for aggressive play seems reasonable, the happy circumstance is that effective dramatic play transcends the limits of Mattel-made props. Why not then compromise by suggesting that although parents should neither forbid nor dismiss their children's aggressive shooting play, they should feel free to exclude commercial toy replicas of guns from the precious landscapes of their homes.

JESSICA DAVIS
Boston, Mass.

"The Importance of Play" perpetuates sexual stereotypes with respect to normal play. Bettelheim presents boys as more aggressive and girls as more passive, and seems to believe that adults should provide for these stereotypical differences. And he consistently uses the masculine pronoun when making points that are not gender-specific.

CARL M. SCHMITTHAUSLER
Omaha, Nebr.

Bettelheim says that a parent should "silently accept" a child's cheating at a game, because he'll soon get better at the game and eventually won't need to. But my question is, what if he only gets better at cheating?

JACK COOPER
West Hollywood, Calif.

REAGAN'S AMERICA

William Schneider's article "The New Shape of American Politics" (January *Atlantic*) perpetuates a myth that has gained considerable acceptance

in the intellectual media: the contention that Ronald Reagan, despite his right-wing rhetoric, has governed as a pragmatist rather than as an ideologue. Schneider asserts that although Reagan's economic successes may have achieved the long-term goal of "making the case for conservative Republicanism," in the short term the President has "avoided ideological confrontations" and has "failed to implement a true conservative program."

Schneider points out, for instance, that Reagan has not started a war or dismantled Social Security. But under those criteria any politician with the slightest interest in re-election could hardly fail to qualify as a moderate. By adopting such an extraordinarily narrow definition of the term *ideologue*, Schneider misrepresents the thoroughly ideological program that Reagan has actually carried out.

To judge Reagan's effectiveness as a conservative crusader, let us, as they say, look at the record. Six years ago Ronald Reagan ran off a string of victories that stunned the political world. He implemented an enormous tax cut, slashed social spending, and launched the biggest military buildup in peacetime history. There has been no retreat. The defense budget at present is nearly twice as large as it was when Reagan took office. Each year the President proposes further cuts in funding for education, health care, and other domestic programs, and the staggering deficit that he has amassed precludes any expansion of such programs in the foreseeable future. Finally, the Tax Reform Act, although containing some salutary features, has also achieved one of Reagan's primary ideological goals: the virtual abandonment of the idea of progressive taxation. By the time he leaves office, Reagan will be able to boast to his wealthy friends that during his two terms the highest marginal rate on personal income fell by 42 percent.

In the foreign-policy arena Reagan has been equally true to his ideological rhetoric. He has abandoned SALT II and has made no progress whatsoever on negotiating a new arms-control agreement—at surprisingly low political cost. And long before the current crisis developed, Reagan was willing to expend considerable political capital on his obsession with "Communist" Nicaragua.

This tendency to minimize Reagan's accomplishments stems from our collective short memory. Many of Reagan's

greatest triumphs occurred early in his first term, and he has lately fallen on hard times. But overall, Reagan has been remarkably effective in implementing his ideology—far more effective than most of us would have imagined possible. Those of us who do not share that ideology must not allow ourselves to be lulled into thinking otherwise. If we forget how many victories Ronald Reagan has won, we will be unable to recover the ground that we have lost.

STEVEN NOVICK
Oakland, Calif.

William Schneider replies:

Where does Mr. Novick get the idea that the intent of my article was to minimize Reagan's accomplishments? Or to deny that he has been remarkably effective in implementing his ideology? I write, on the very first page, "Tax cuts, budget deficits, and tax reform are no longer passing items on the political agenda. They form the basis of a new institutional order that will set the terms of political debate far beyond the Reagan years." Example: When Senator Ed-

ward M. Kennedy took over the chairmanship of the Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee this year, he called for "a new agenda for social progress in America." Kennedy then explained how he proposed to implement this agenda: "America does not have to spend more to do more." That's the Reagan revolution.

My point was that "the impact of the Reagan revolution is more likely to be felt in the long run than in the short run." Reagan did indeed win a stunning string of victories. Most Americans did not understand how thoroughgoing the changes were. They still don't. In a *Los Angeles Times* poll taken in February the public denied by a 53 to 34 percent majority that a Reagan revolution had ever taken place.

Conservatives are just as badly deluded by the President's shrewd pragmatism. What I wrote was, "*Many right-wingers* say that Reagan has failed to implement a true conservative program" (emphasis added). For instance, Reagan never made a serious effort to get the religious right's social agenda through Congress. That would have been tanta-

mount to political suicide, as Mr. Novick observes. But in the long run Reagan's transformation of the federal judiciary will probably accomplish the same objective. It is the conservatives who "tend to minimize Reagan's accomplishments." Mr. Novick's quarrel is with them, not me.

INDIAN MUSIC

William H. Youngren ("American Soundings," March *Atlantic*) asks why the editors of *The New Grove Dictionary of American Music* gave so much space to articles on the music of the American Indians and so little to white vernacular musics like bluegrass and country. The answer has more to do with the history of American music scholarship than with what Youngren calls "reverse racism" or with the relative historical impact or aesthetic value of the musics in question.

Many of the leading American ethnomusicologists of this century cut their scholarly teeth on the study of Native American music. They were motivated



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not only by the inherent interest of the music and its cultural setting but also by professional pressures. For most of its existence the field of ethnomusicology has struggled to be accepted as a serious field of scholarly endeavor, and this encouraged ethnomusicologists to prove their mettle by studying the musics of cultures that were markedly different from their own. The American Indians provided just such an "exotic" culture right within our own borders, so students of their music could do fieldwork without even obtaining a passport. They were also able to obtain funds from foundations and government agencies who were sympathetic to the study of our own "national" music.

While the editors of the *New Grove American* hope that their work will be consulted by many music lovers, they must know that it will most often be consulted by other scholars like themselves. The number of pages devoted to American Indian music reflects its interest for music scholars, not the role that it plays in our present musical culture.

DAVID FLANAGAN
Ithaca, N.Y.

William H. Youngren writes, "American Indian music survives, diluted, only in events staged for tourists."

The Hopi, Navajo, and other tribes have incorporated music as a vital part of their cultures since long before the Pilgrims bebopped across Plymouth Rock or Youngren began whistling his way toward a doctorate in musicology. Doubters would do well to witness the likes of a brilliantly costumed and choreographed traditional Hopi kachina dance, calling rain to the parched mesa tops of Arizona, or to sit through the night at the fringe of a mystical Navajo sing—if they could get an invitation to one of these non-tourist events. Anyone who has can tell you about music's unbridled power.

Youngren asks why oppressed blacks created a culturally mixed music—jazz—with worldwide impact, while Indians did not. Though blacks were brutally enslaved and oppressed for generations, they were not subject to the degree of geographic—hence cultural—isolation experienced by Native Americans, especially in the Southwest. That isolation may well be responsible for the preservation of this country's only indigenous culture, music and all.

STEWART B. ISKOW
Mercer Island, Wash.

The ancient religions and the music associated with them are alive and well in the Southwest. The Hopis of Arizona and the Pueblo tribes living along the Rio Grande in New Mexico continue to celebrate their festivals in a sincere traditional fashion, with little or no interest in tourism. Outsiders are welcome at most ceremonies if they attend with a respectful manner. By no means are all rituals open to non-Indians. A white woman with whom I am acquainted married a Pueblo Indian man and lived with him in the pueblo. During certain ceremonies she was actually locked into her house so that she could not witness the sacred rituals. This is "staged for tourists"?

MEG MELTZ
Santa Fe, N.M.

William H. Youngren replies:

Mr. Flanagan is of course quite right about the central role played by American Indian music in the development of American ethnomusicology. (For many of the same reasons, American Indian languages played a very similar role in the development of American structural linguistics.) But the statements that I quoted from the *New Grove American's* editors make it clear, I think, that their extensive coverage of American Indian music was not motivated simply by the desire to provide scholarly information. Therefore, it seems that Mr. Flanagan's remarks complement rather than contradict mine.

I am sorry if my reference to "events staged for tourists" annoyed Mr. Iskow and Ms. Meltz; I was going by the testimony of a couple of anthropologist friends.

FALLOWS ON JAPAN

I read with interest—and some dismay—James Fallows's article on Japanese education ("Gradgrind's Heirs") in the March *Atlantic*. The interest was natural, in view of our recent efforts here on the subject. The dismay was not with the general thrust of Fallows's observations on Japanese education—on balance, they are accurate enough—but with the misunderstanding, or misrepresentation, of the Department of Education's report on Japanese education, beginning with the summary head immediately following the title of the article: "*Despite what the U.S. Department of Education says. . .*"

Fallows's article gives the clear impression that he may not actually have read our report. Virtually every point he makes about Japanese education is well covered in the report, and Fallows is on particularly shaky ground in his IQ section, beginning with the nonsense about "ignoring the endless arguments about IQ tests." As a serious review of the literature will show, no credible evidence is available that Japanese children have a higher level of native intelligence than American children.

No one who has read our report could fairly conclude that the Department of Education is advocating uncritical admiration of the Japanese education system or wholesale adoption of its policies and practices.

CHESTER E. FINN, JR.
*U.S. Department of Education
Washington, D.C.*

James Fallows has his heart in the right place, but his reply to a letter from George Givens (February *Atlantic*), which wonders why he criticizes Japan for not giving Koreans and other "immigrants" Japanese citizenship, is full of errors.

Most of the roughly 700,000 Koreans living in Japan today are in no sense immigrants, since they were born and raised in Japan, were educated in Japanese schools, and can completely pass as ethnic-majority Yamato Japanese. Their parents (or grandparents) were once Japanese citizens who voluntarily migrated to the Japanese islands between 1910 and 1945, when Korea was part of the Japanese Empire. After the war Korean (and Taiwanese) Japanese colonial subjects lost their Japanese nationality, but most of those who had settled in Japan chose to stay there because it had become their home. Most of the Korean laborers who were forcibly brought to the Japanese islands during the war were repatriated after 1945.

Also contrary to what Fallows states, becoming a Japanese citizen is not difficult, except in the mind. In some ways naturalization is easier in Japan than in the United States. Anyone who has lived in Japan for five or more years and is economically independent and has no criminal record can probably qualify. No racial, ethnic, or religious conditions are imposed. Though the ability to speak or write Japanese helps, neither is necessary, nor does one have to know anything about the history or government of Japan.

The great majority of Koreans in Japan qualify for naturalization. The requirements are considerably relaxed for all former Korean (and Taiwanese) Japanese colonials or their descendants in Japan, and for other resident foreigners, such as the foreign spouses and children of Japanese nationals, and former Japanese nationals.

Most national ethnic minorities in Japan choose not to naturalize because, like many of those who discriminate against them, they associate Japanese nationality with Yamato ethnicity. Hence many Koreans consider becoming Japanese a betrayal of their Korean identity, and Japanese or Koreans are not inclined to encourage or accept "Korean Japanese" or other labels denoting a compound identity, though in addition to Yamato Japanese majorities the population mix includes indigenous ethnic minorities like Ainu Japanese and Okinawan Japanese, and dozens of other kinds of native-born and naturalized Japanese minorities.

Thus Fallows misleads readers when he describes the situation of Japan's Koreans as "parallel" to the case of blacks in the United States. Even so, his view that Japan's immigration (and trade) policies are highly racialistic is fully corroborated by Japanese attitudes and practices, in government and private sectors, in Japan as well as overseas.

WILLIAM WETHERALL
Nagareyama, Japan

James Fallows replies:

Chester Finn is right on one point. I did not read the Department of Education's report before writing my story, because the report had not been released. It was released shortly before the issue containing my article went to the printer. To achieve a semblance of timeliness, we (*I in Malaysia, an editor in Boston*) inserted two brief references to the report, based on extensive press coverage that portrayed it as a how-to-learn-from-the-Japanese exercise. One reference praised the report for showing that the schools were building blocks of Japan's economic success. The other came after a discussion of *ijime*, or bullying, and consisted of one sentence: "Here is an aspect of Japanese education that you won't find celebrated by our Department of Education."

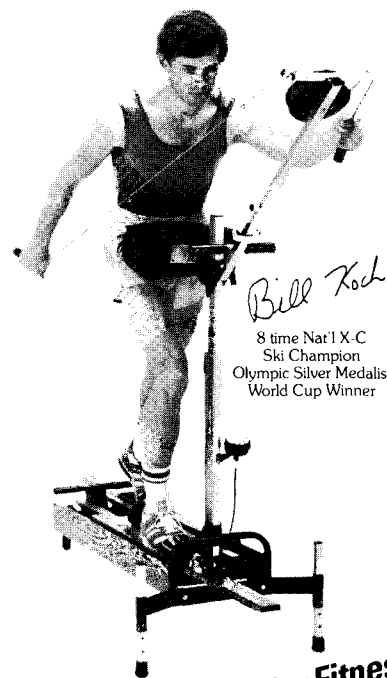
I read the report several weeks later, and it is a very impressive document. If it had been available before I wrote my article, I would have noted its thorough-

ness and quoted it on several points. But I wouldn't necessarily have changed either of the brief references that did appear in my story. The report does dwell on the connection between schools and industrial success, and it does give *ijime* proportionately less emphasis than other accounts have. Authors understandably fly off the handle when they feel their work has been slighted or overlooked. I know that emotion, and I think I recognize it here.

Mr. Finn's comment about IQ gives the clear impression that he may not actually have read my article. I would never claim, and didn't, that Japanese children "have a higher level of native intelligence than American children." I did point out the uncontested fact that Japanese children do better on IQ tests, on the whole, than American children do. To be more precise, fewer Japanese than American children get very low scores.

Perhaps some Japanese people do believe this reflects a difference in native intelligence. (According to a recent opinion poll, conducted in Tokyo and cited by the *Asahi Shimbun*, 80 percent of Japanese respondents agreed that the Japanese were smarter and harder working than any other nationality.) But Japanese educational experts generally explain the IQ scores as reflecting Japanese child-rearing practices and educational policy, above all the conviction that practically anyone is smart enough to learn if he tries. This interpretation, which I tried to get across in my article, of course rests on the assumption that IQ scores are influenced by factors other than native intelligence. If Mr. Finn disagrees with that assumption, then perhaps it is not such "nonsense" to say that there are endless arguments over IQ.

As for the Koreans, I may have gone too far in comparing their situation to that of American blacks in the post-Civil War era. As Mr. Wetherall points out, there are too many idiosyncrasies to make the comparison fair. Still, my own, admittedly limited experience in Japan leaves me surprised at his assertion that naturalized citizenship is easier to come by in Japan than in the United States. I still remember the shocked looks on the faces of some refugee administrators when I asked whether any of the 4,000-odd Indochinese refugees Japan reluctantly accepted, or their Japanese-born children, might someday become citizens of Japan.



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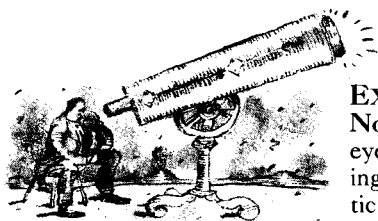
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THE JUNE ALMANAC



THE SKIES

June 9, Saturn is at opposition, rising as the sun sets, setting as the sun rises; the ringed planet will be the telescopic showpiece of the summer to come. 11, Full Moon, also known this month as the Rose Moon. 21, Midsummer's Night, marking the summer solstice; the sun has reached its farthest point north of the Equator and now begins its march south. 26, New Moon. The bright planets in June, besides Saturn, are Mercury and Mars, both of which succumb to solar glare in the west, around sundown, and Jupiter, in the southeastern morning sky.

FOOD

The spring flush (or peak period) of milk production ends this month. The seasonal increase used to be dramatic, because the cows had recently been released from the winter doldrums of barn life and rumination on silage, and were back in the fields grazing on fresh grass. Simultaneously there was a decrease in demand for milk, as school-lunch programs took a summer vacation. Dairymen were inspired by souring surpluses to initiate National Dairy Month, 50 years ago this June. The peak in milk production has since grown less pronounced, as winter feeding practices have changed and as herds have followed the population to the warmer South and West, but marketers are still trying to find new things to do with milk. One idea in the works is flavored, carbonated milk, but don't look for it in stores until 1989.



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ARTS & LETTERS

June 12 & 15, presentation of the CLIO awards, the Oscars of advertising; radio, TV, and print ads will be honored for, among other things, "believability and tastefulness." 13, Garrison Keillor makes his final appearance on *A Prairie Home Companion*, the American Public Radio show he started 13 years ago. Keillor plans "to resume life as a shy person." 15, Daniel Boorstin, the Librarian of Congress, will resign his post after 12 years of service. Boorstin plans to resume life as "a full-time citizen of the republic of letters."

ENVIRONMENT

"A noise like of a hidden brook/ In the leafy month of June,/ That to the sleeping woods all night/ Singeth a quiet tune"—Samuel Taylor Coleridge. June 1, the beginning of the hurricane season. The names of the storms will be drawn from two sets (one for the Atlantic and one for the Pacific) of revolving lists. The World Meteorological Organization "retires" a name only when its namesake has distinguished itself by large-scale death and destruction; hurricane Allen did so in 1980 (it was replaced by Andrew), as did Alicia in 1983 (replaced by Allison). Elena (1985) and Gloria (1985) are facing retirement. The first six storms in the Atlantic this year will be Arlene, Bret, Cindy, Dennis, Emily, and Floyd.

HEALTH & SAFETY

The season for tick-borne diseases is upon us. Lyme disease, which was discovered only a decade ago, in Lyme, Conn., has surpassed Rocky Mountain spotted fever to become the nation's most prevalent tick-borne disease. More than 1,500 cases a year are reported to the Centers for Disease Control. The onset of the disease, which can have neurologic, cardiac, and arthritic consequences, is heralded by a localized skin rash. Transmission works like this: young ticks engorge themselves on infected deer, birds, or mice, drop off their hosts, grow to adulthood, and then climb into the brush to await an opportunity, which they can smell, to engorge themselves a final time. "The tick, sullen, stubborn, and loathsome, huddles there and lives and waits," writes Patrick Süskind in his recent novel, *Perfume*. "Waits, for that most improbable of chances that will bring blood, in animal form, directly beneath its tree."



GOVERNMENT

June 8, this week the President will announce the names of a dozen or more 1987-88 White House Fellows, selected from a pool of 850 applicants. Since 1967 some 300 fellows, including the former National Security Advisor Robert McFarlane, the San Antonio mayor Henry G. Cisneros, and the biographer Doris Kearns Goodwin, have come to Washington for "one year of personal involvement in the process of government." 14, Flag Day, commemorating the 210th anniversary of the American flag. Of the claim by Betsy Ross that she created the first U.S. flag, the historian David Eggenberger writes: "Supporting evidence [is] contradictory, confused, and uncorroborated."



DEMOGRAPHICS

Twenty-four men will play on the two teams competing in this month's National Basketball Association championship playoff series. The average NBA player now stands over 6 feet 7 inches tall, up some 4 inches since 1947. The height of the average American man has increased by almost an inch in the past quarter century (he is now just over 5 feet 9 inches tall) and that of the average woman has increased by about half an inch (to almost 5 feet 4 inches). Other factors being equal, tall college graduates earn more on their first job than their shorter classmates do, but short people live longer than do tall ones. A recent survey of the roughly 3,000 deceased ballplayers listed in *The Baseball Encyclopedia* revealed that on the average, each inch of height above 5 feet 4 inches meant a 1.2 year decrease in longevity.

125 YEARS AGO

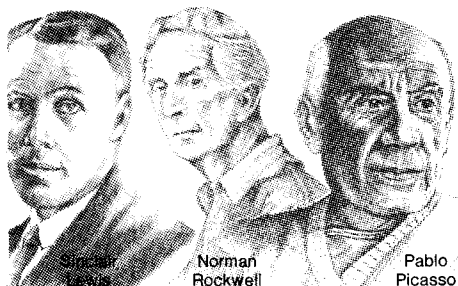
Henry David Thoreau, in the June, 1862, issue of *The Atlantic Monthly*, on the subject of walking: "If you would get exercise, go in search of the springs of life. Think of a man's swinging dumbbells for his health, when those springs are bubbling up in far-off pastures unsought by him!

"Moreover, you must walk like a camel, which is said to be the only beast which ruminates when walking. When a traveller asked Wordsworth's servant to show him her master's study, she answered, 'Here is his library, but his study is out of doors.'"





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REPORTS & COMMENT

NOTES

THE LONGEST DAY

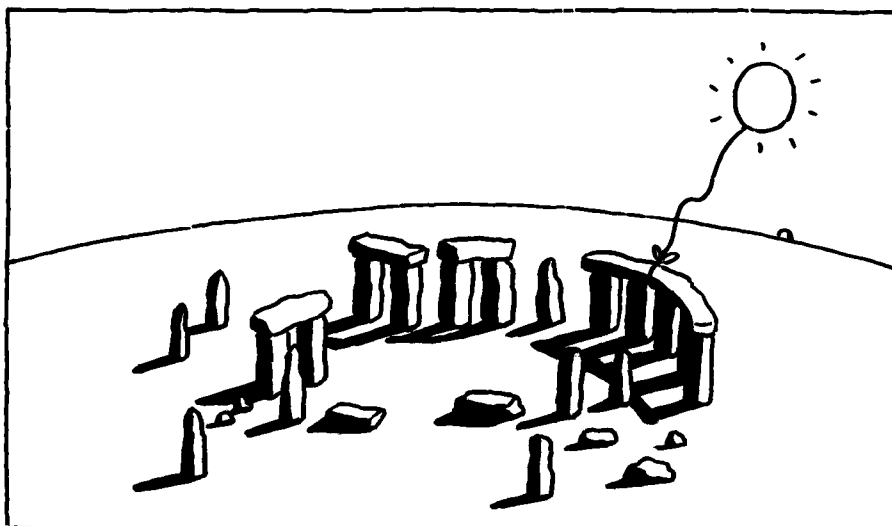
THIS YEAR THE summer solstice falls on the twenty-first of June, and on that morning an observer standing at the center of Stonehenge and looking toward the northeast will see the sun rise over the summit of the so-called Heel Stone, which stands a short distance beyond the megalith's perimeter. Actually, the sun will appear slightly to the left of the Heel Stone's blunted apex, but the sight, I have been told, is impressive all the same. Not many people will be allowed to see it this year, however. Stonehenge has, it seems, become a gathering place on the summer solstice for many of those in Britain who have adopted a lifestyle at variance with mainstream insular tendencies. Some of these people are young, trailer-based itinerants, of questionable cleanliness and with no visible means of support, whose purpose in life appears to be (in the words of press accounts) to "alarm local authorities." Others are white-clad adherents of the ancient Druid cult, which seems rapidly to be displacing the Church of England in Britain as an outlet for popular piety. Come late June, a mob of such enthusiasts will converge on the chalk downs of Wiltshire for the solstitial sunrise. But Stonehenge will be surrounded, as it was last year, with coils of barbed wire and an ample detachment of policemen.

I spent a morning at Stonehenge not long ago, on a day when very few people were there, and grew immediately fond of the place and its irrational appeal. For one thing, it fails to disappoint one phys-

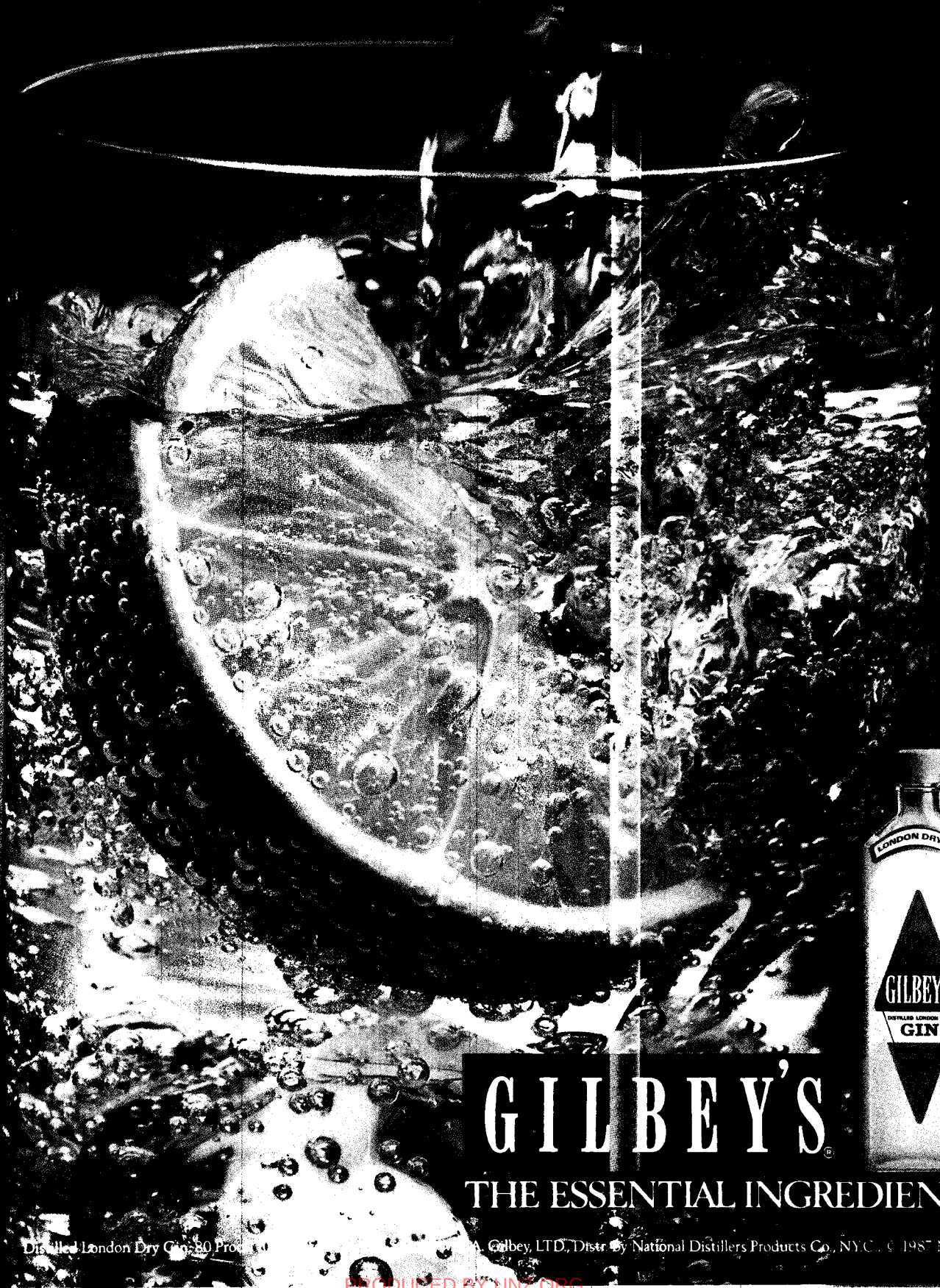
ically. I have heard the Pyramids and Mount Rushmore belittled by people who have seen them, but I have never heard an ill word about Stonehenge, which is smaller and far less handsome. The reason, I think, has to do with its setting. Stonehenge can be seen across the flat open fields of Salisbury Plain from a mile or two away, and one's eyes naturally gravitate to the only big object in the landscape for which chlorophyll is not responsible. The structure is also remarkably old—some 5,000 years old. Archaeologists did not know this until the mid-1960s, when radiocarbon dating and its astute employment by the British archaeologist Colin Renfrew forced them to abandon all the previous theories about how architectural advances had been exported to the barbaric northern lands from the Mediterranean and the Middle East. (Stonehenge, it turned out, pre-dates the elegant Greek citadel at Mycenae.) No one knows quite how the ring was constructed or what it was used for. It rises from a plain that is pocked with hundreds of burial mounds and scarred by the soft depressions of

neolithic tracks and ditches—obviously quite a place in its day, though now given over to farmland and, a bit to the north, a military base. Walking over the landscape nearby provokes all kinds of reflections. Almost every rise and depression in the fields was deliberately constructed, for reasons that are often not fully understood, thousands of years ago. Someone who died when Ozymandias reigned could be responsible for your spraining an ankle.

Stonehenge was old, and perhaps already a curiosity, when the Romans, and after them the Angles, Saxons, and Jutes, came to Britain. One can only speculate about what any of these people made of the place, since their opinions on the subject have not come down to us. But they certainly noticed it. The Romans left coins and pottery at the site, and the Anglo-Saxons gave Stonehenge its name. It is probably safe to assume that they all read meaning into Stonehenge from the comfort of their own world view. This seems to be what everyone whose thoughts we know about has done. The Normans—one of



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whom, around 1130 A.D., composed the earliest written reference to Stonehenge which has survived—wove Arthurian legends around the ring to glorify the British past. In the eighteenth century, some writers enthralled by the pastoral ideal saw Stonehenge as the Jerusalem of Druidic ritual and depicted the Druids, who are known to have practiced human sacrifice, in terms that today might apply to Unitarian members of the Green Party. (As it happens, no evidence links the Druids and Stonehenge at all.) In our time, thanks largely to the efforts of an IBM computer and the astronomer Gerald Hawkins, whose book *Stonehenge Decoded* was a best seller in the United States in 1965, Stonehenge has come to be regarded by many not merely as a remarkable example of primitive engineering but as a mini-Mount Palomar—an astronomical observatory of surprising sophistication, capable of predicting eclipses of the sun and the moon. That the phrase “ancient computer” now elicits instant comprehension when associated, in the press, with any enigmatic lithic structure is mostly Hawkins’s doing, and I pretty much assumed until very recently that Hawkins’s word on the matter, however refined by other scholars, was the last one.

APPARENTLY, HOWEVER, this is not the case. I had a chance recently to speak with Colin Renfrew, who teaches at Cambridge University, and he explained that few of his British colleagues today subscribe to the Stonehenge-as-observatory theory and that, furthermore, “I’m not sure that many of us ever did, really.” It seems that the weight of British archaeological opinion, which can be ponderous indeed, has fallen in behind a contrary view. Yes, the British scholars say, the alignment of some of Stonehenge’s stones, such as those that point approximately to the places on the horizon where the sun will rise on the longest day of the year and set on the shortest one, was undoubtedly deliberate. But most of the other proposed alignments have no significance whatsoever, and may be explained as the inevitable product of coincidence in a structure that once contained more than 150 stones in more or less circular patterns, and that stands beneath a sky whose own patterns are cyclic. (One archaeologist has noted that even the Oval Office, if it had a few more windows, could be shown to be a primitive observatory.) I frankly resisted this humbler view of Stone-

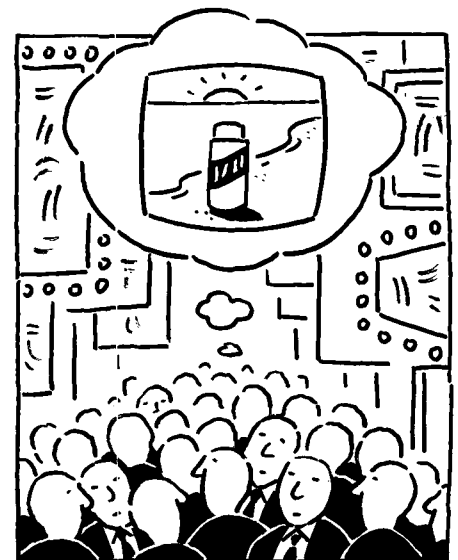
henge, perhaps because I had derived a successful high school career in science in no small part from the work of Professor Hawkins, but the evidence in favor of it seems overwhelming. For one thing, the apparent coherence of the structure is an illusion; it was built in fits and starts, with new features canceling out old ones, over a period of about 1,500 years. And it is not obvious how Stonehenge is supposed to work; proponents of the Stonehenge-as-observatory school have put forward a half a dozen different theories. What this suggests, as the archaeologist Christopher Chippindale recently observed, is that “if you toy with Stonehenge for long enough, you are sure to come up with something astronomical it can be made to do.”

It may be that Stonehenge will forever stand as one of those few ancient monuments about which one can say little more beyond mere description than that a couple hundred generations of people have felt the urge, for one reason or another, to get close to it. And it may be, too, that ignorance about the place underlies its enduring appeal. Unlike the Maya temples, unlike the Circus Maximus, Stonehenge has nothing about it that prompts unpleasant associations, and perhaps for this reason it seems permanently fresh and available for use. Stonehenge has been replicated on the banks of the Columbia River, in Washington State, as a war memorial; in Missouri, at the state university in Rolla, as an observatory; and in Blackstock, Canada, as a tribute to the crushed cars from which the replica there has been fashioned. It appears in advertisements for cameras, computers, and cigarettes, and has lent its name to housing developments and hotels. Stonehenge figures therapeutically in the novel *A Maggot*, by John Fowles: “He pointed to a great stone that lay imbedded flat beside others that still stood and told her to lie upon it, for such was the superstition, or so he said, that a woman taken there might help a man regain his vigours.” And, of course, there are the Druids and the itinerants—not to mention a breed of crank antiquarians, hardy perennials on the British scene, with their exotic opinions, their ample supplies of stationery, and their propinquity to a free press. So many tourists visit Stonehenge every year, and unwittingly degrade the site, that some thought has been given by the directors of the English Heritage Commission, which looks after the monument, to erecting a full-sized repli-

ca nearby. The replica would perhaps be made of Styrofoam or Fiberglas; it has been referred to in the tabloids as Foamhenge. Perhaps on the summer solstice it could align with a plastic sun.

I expect that Foamhenge, being just the sort of project against which cooler heads can be counted on to prevail, will not actually be built, and that is a pity. A synthetic Stonehenge might last forever and would be plagued by few of the maintenance problems that have beset the original monument. More important, it would be certain to baffle future generations. Scholars 5,000 years from now would have to ask themselves not only What was it for? but also Why are there two? And the one who guessed right would probably never be taken seriously.

—Cullen Murphy



JAPANESE YEARNINGS

I LOVE JAPANESE television. The programs are so trashily out of character with the famous delicacy and refinement of Japanese taste that I watch them to boost my spirits whenever the economic news gets me down.

For two weeks every other month, saturation coverage of sumo matches offers melodrama and morality plays. The newly promoted grand champion, for example, has lost a few matches and thrown his countrymen into despair, because his love for skin diving and distaste for pre-dawn practice confirm Japan’s worst fears about its pampered young. Late-night “wide shows” are TV

versions of the *Playboy* magazine of the 1950s. One is hosted by a white-haired famous novelist, as hokey-urbane as Hef in pajamas, who strikes thoughtful poses while teenage "mascot girls" parade by with and without bikinis. Every night several channels run samurai and ninja dramas, with so much head-lobbing and belly-slitting that it seems miraculous that any Japanese are still alive today. Quiz and game shows are even more popular in Japan than in America, including several built around *hen na gaijin*—"weird foreigners"—who can speak excellent Japanese and who astonish the audience each time they open their mouths. Two of the best-known game-show *gaijin*, young men who came here as Mormon missionaries, have become so famous that when one of them is pictured in a TV commercial or on a subway placard, he needs no identification. A new genre, which an American friend of mine calls "fashion drama," dispenses with plot altogether and exists mainly to display fancier clothes and better cars than the average Japanese owns.

But for all their strange fascination, the programs on Japanese TV are not so deeply revealing as the commercials. Only there, I've come to think, does reserved, taciturn Japan let the outsider glimpse its soul's longings. Japanese commercials have nothing in common with the hard sell of America's "ring around the collar" or Crazy Eddie ads. They're so relentless in building "image," and so reluctant to say anything about the product itself, that it's often hard to tell what an ad is for. Ads for cars, beer, children's clothes, and instant ramen may all look roughly the same until the last few seconds, when the announcer reveals the product's name. The Japanese advertising men I've spoken with say that made-in-Japan products are so indistinguishably perfect that image is the only possible selling point—hence the form of the ads. But it is the imagery itself and what it says about Japan's dreams that intrigues me.

Some of the images would be familiar and effective in other cultures, too. Cigarette commercials (they still have them here) throb with sex appeal, to prove that smoking is romantic and suave. Life-insurance companies show cozy family scenes. Ivy League and English-tweedy atmospherics help sell whiskey and clothes. But one theme, perhaps the most common, seems peculiarly Japanese.

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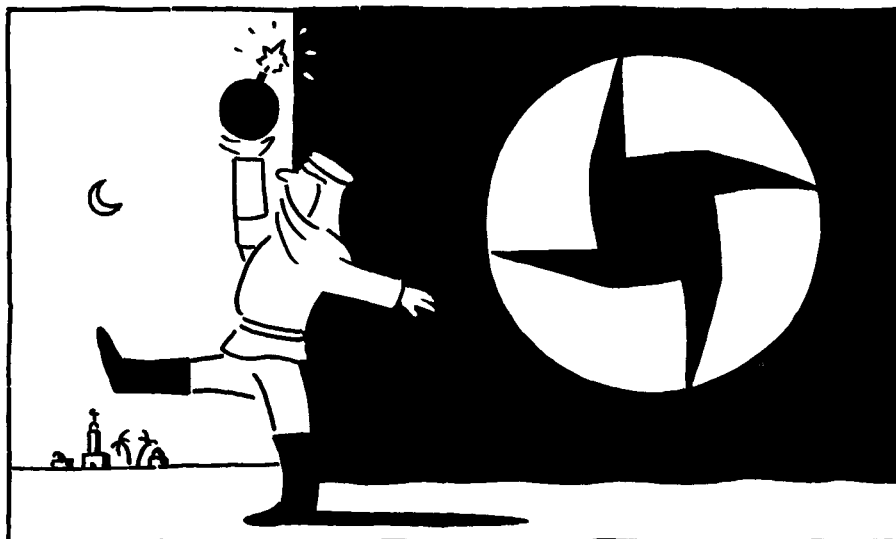
looks nothing like the place where the Japanese live. To judge by its commercials, Japan might as well be Wyoming, a land of wide-open vistas and free-spirited people who test themselves against the elements and live as they please. I've hardly ever seen an ad set in the Japan most of its residents cope with daily—the Japan of crowded subways and 200-person group sightseeing tours and apartments so short on floor space that one dresser is stacked unsteadily on top of another. In the TV Japan people are always climbing mountains or walking along splendid beaches with no one else in sight. In the Japan I've seen, weary salarymen are always trudging home through the rain in wrinkled blue polyester suits. One advertising man told me that commercials shot indoors always show rooms with white, uncluttered walls and practically no furniture

at all. That, he said, evokes the luxury of spaciousness that Japanese families want but can't have.

The image ads are meant to be upbeat, but to me they're poignant, because they suggest that even today's world-beating Japan is not so well adjusted as it pretends to be. For forty years it has worked hard and lived lean so as to earn its way back to pride. Frugality and self-sacrifice may come naturally to the Japanese, but the ads send a different message. They suggest that today's Japanese notice the things that, in their drive to the top, they've had to give up.

I think I understand the function of these ads. Once I lived in a dismal basement apartment, its one window giving onto an airshaft. Over the window I hung a poster of Big Sur.

—James Fallows



THE MIDDLE EAST BEHIND THE TERROR

A little-publicized group led by Christians eager for Syria to dominate the Middle East is responsible for many highly publicized terrorist acts

TO INSPIRE HIS troops to seek martyrdom, the Ayatollah Khomeini promises them a room next to his in paradise. The suicide bombers of the Hizballah (Party of God), whose terrorist arm is better known as the Islamic Jihad, look forward to everlasting life in the bosom of the merciful Allah. But there is

a more bizarre growth spreading in the landscape of international terrorism: a party whose members go knowingly and willingly to their deaths without the comfort of a hereafter, out of pure conviction, in the service of an idea. It is a party whose leaders, men approaching their seventies, send pregnant teenagers on suicide missions in booby-trapped cars. And it is a party whose members, mostly Christians from churchgoing families, dream of resuming the war of the ancient Canaanites against Joshua and the Children of Israel. They greet their leaders with a Hitlerian salute; sing their Arabic anthem, "Greetings to You, Syria," to the strains of "Deutschland, Deutschland über alles"; and throng to the symbol of the red hurricane, a swastika in circular motion.

These are the hallmarks of the Syrian

Social Nationalist Party (SSNP), the oldest terrorist organization in existence today and one of the most secret and deadly. Despite its long history of violence, Western security organs were recently taken by surprise when they learned that a well-camouflaged arm of the SSNP had succeeded in setting up a large terror network in Western Europe—complete with safe houses, weapons caches, and forged passports—and that it was the SSNP that had set off a series of deadly explosions in the heart of Paris, to gain the release of Georges Ibrahim Abdallah. The United States, too, has felt the effects of the SSNP. The explosion aboard a TWA flight nearing Athens in April of 1986, which cost the lives of four passengers—one of them an infant—has been traced to May Mansur, of Tripoli, a veteran member of the SSNP, who debarked at a previous stopover after placing a bomb under her seat.

Dedicated to the principle of establishing Greater Syria—which extends from the Euphrates to the Nile, an area that today includes Syria, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, and southeastern Turkey—the SSNP has little in common with the Shiite religious zealots of the Hizballah, who, operating from Iran to Lebanon, are trying to bring the kingdom of heaven down to earth, or with members of the Palestine Liberation Organization, who seek the redemption of their lost homeland at the end of a trail of blood. Although the SSNP may align itself with these groups for the sake of expediency, it regards them all as fighting for the sectarian interests of pseudo-national communities that are misguided in their failure to identify with the broader "Syrian nation." If the Islamic Jihad or the PLO indirectly or even inadvertently advances the "Syrian cause," the SSNP is glad to collaborate. But it will not support the Hizballah in its aim of founding an Islamic republic in Lebanon or help the PLO work toward the establishment of an independent Palestinian state, for these goals clash head-on with the SSNP's goal of a secular Syrian state. And while it supports the present Syrian government of President Hafez al-Assad as the fulcrum of power in Syria, the SSNP is wary of the regime's sectarian (Alawi) and socialist leanings and its support of pan-Arabism, which calls for an Arab state (as opposed to the Syrian state called for by the SSNP) spanning the area between the Atlantic Ocean and the Persian Gulf. Since the death of Ga-

mal Abdel Nasser, the Egyptian leader, pan-Arabism has become more a sentiment than a political movement.

The SSNP has an independent tradition of more than fifty years of violence, and some of the decisive events in the modern history of the Middle East have been triggered by its expertise in political assassination. For example, the murder of Colonel Adnan Maliki, the Syrian deputy chief of staff, in 1955, which led almost directly to Soviet influence over Syria, and the murder of Lebanon's President-elect Bashir Gemayel, in September of 1982, which sparked the massacres in the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps and prompted the collapse of Israeli Defence Minister Ariel Sharon's plans to change the face of the Middle East, can both be traced directly to the SSNP.

Since March of 1985 the SSNP has sent about half a dozen suicide drivers in booby-trapped vehicles, or "torches," toward Israel from Lebanon, killing about thirty civilians in the explosions. This style of terrorism was inspired by the success of the Shiite fanatics who blew themselves up in the camps of the American Marines and the French troops in Beirut. The man currently responsible for training these suicide bombers, a stocky, bearded fellow in his mid-thirties named Assad Khardan, has created something of a cult around the suicide attacks. Khardan, who earned himself the position of SSNP commissioner of security in part by forcing his predecessor to jump to his death from a third-story balcony, has been known to spend months preparing candidates for suicide missions. He is especially fond of using attractive young women from indigent families, and has already sent four such martyrs to their deaths. The feminine gender is not a *sine qua non*, however; four men have blown themselves up inside vehicles packed with half a ton of explosives each. All successfully negotiated their way up to one of the roadblocks just outside the Israeli security zone (which extends about seven and a half miles into Lebanon) and activated the detonator when they were stopped for the standard search and check of documents. Unlike the Shiites of the Islamic Jihad, the SSNP does not have to send out a backup team with a remote-control detonator in case its emissaries get cold feet at the last minute.

One surviving girl, who was nineteen years old at the time of what was to be her martyrdom, was recruited after run-

ning away from home and stumbling into a Lebanese town where the Syrians and their sympathizers maintain a large base. She was arrested on suspicion of having been sent to gather intelligence for the Israelis. After several weeks of interrogation, her captors—a mixture of Syrian soldiers and SSNP militiamen—began to visit her cell at night, and she soon discovered that she was pregnant. She was cleared of all suspicion and released, and found a haven in the local branch of the Leftist Front (a coalition of about a dozen parties that lean toward Marxist ideology), where her guardians began to drum the SSNP's principles into her. Over and over again she was shown videotapes of the "last will and testaments" recorded by other young women before they set out on their suicide missions. No one forced her to take on her own mission, and no one assured her a place in paradise; there were neither threats nor inducements. "They just explained to me how important the mission was," she later said, "how much they would respect me if I stood up to the test."

All the other suicide bombers dispatched by the SSNP likewise carried heavy emotional baggage. One had failed his examinations at a technical institute and feared the reaction of his family and friends. Another felt crushed by the burden of supporting a large family after his father died. None of them, incidentally, managed to keep his plans secret; without exception they alluded to their intentions weeks and even months in advance. One young woman told her fiancé that she would not be able to marry him on the date set for their wedding, because all that would remain of her would be a "dark red lump."

Today schools, streets, squares, and public institutions throughout Syria are named after the suicide bombers, and the country's most popular singer, Marcel Khalifa, has recently monopolized the top spot on the hit parade with his anthem to the suicides. Video cassettes of the bombers' "wills" are available at sidewalk kiosks, and sales are consistently brisk.

SYRIAN SOCIAL NATIONALISM is in its way a religion; it claims to be a comprehensive philosophical doctrine that provides answers to all the questions and quandaries of life and thus supersedes every other faith. It is not by chance that when new recruits are sworn in to the

SSNP they are required to renounce all other loyalties in a ceremony they refer to as a baptism—the washing away of the past and divorcement from everything that is not in the service of "the idea." No other terrorist organization requires such total dedication; the members of the SSNP are required to pledge—in advance and without reservation—their souls, not just their time and energies. If the members of the SSNP seek heaven on earth, it is not the anarchist's paradise of absolute freedom but an Elysium of blind obedience and the subordination of the individual to the glory of Greater Syria.

This religion has its own martyred prophet, holy scripture, and, of course, rituals; all it lacks is a deity. The prophet is Antun Sa'adeh. Thirty-eight years after he was executed in the dead of night, the holy scripture he left behind—a confused treatise titled *The Growth of Nations*—has a whole new following. Sa'adeh called for a completely new reading of history based on a doctrine according to which Moses, Jesus, and Mohammed were instruments of the "Syrian genius" who contributed to the inexorable rise of the ancient Syrian nation as the strongest and most creative force in the annals of mankind. Sa'adeh was not disturbed by the fact that the nation he spoke of—a conglomerate of all the peoples and tribes that since the dawn of history have lived between the Euphrates River and the Mediterranean Sea—does not exist and that most scholars shrug disdainfully at the notion that it ever did. His explanation, as expanded upon in current party publications, for the failure of these tribes and peoples to cohere into a unified kingdom is that the enemies of the nation—from King Cyrus to Ronald Reagan—have always conspired against it at just the critical moment, sabotaging its redemption from disarray.

A teacher of German who had grown up in Egypt and Brazil, Antun Sa'adeh was a short, high-browed, and distinctly unimpressive-looking man who behaved imperiously and demanded blind obedience, banishing even the most loyal of his followers the moment they questioned his will. Sa'adeh was born to Lebanese Greek Orthodox parents, and he spent much of his adult life in Lebanon. There he saw the problem that Christians faced in supporting future regimes: for a Christian to join any sort of pan-Arab movement would imply that he renounced the possibility of political

equality. So Sa'adeh created a vision in which neither Islam nor pan-Arabism was important, and therefore religion wasn't either. Much taken with European fascism, he introduced to the Lebanon of the 1930s a simplistic vision of harmony among the country's many ethnic communities through a return to Syrian "racial unity" (actual races were kept vague, since Greater Syria would include the non-Semitic Turks, but Jews were certainly excluded) and a collective dedication to the revival of the Syrian nation. In place of the clashes between the Christian Maronites and the Moslems, the Kurds and the Bedouin, Sa'adeh recommended that all groups view themselves as heirs of the empires of Babylonia and Assyria, the descendants of the Hittites and the kings of Aram. Sa'adeh kept his party in Lebanon, where the large Greek Orthodox population ensured that he would attract his natural constituency. Underground "cells" formed in Syria, Jordan, and Palestine, among other neighboring countries.

Sa'adeh's followers today are aware of not only who is in the nation but also who its enemies are—meaning who are its targets for terrorist actions. This is a highly varied list, including the governments of Turkey, Egypt, and Iran (despite the number of enemies that Iran and the SSNP share, any independent rule of Iran threatens Greater Syria), as well as Israel—or, to be more precise, Jews everywhere. While the rest of Israel's enemies, including the PLO, dispute the right of the Jews to return to their ancestral homeland after 2,000 years of life in dispersion but ostensibly have no complaint against those Jews who have remained in the Diaspora, the SSNP's account with the Jews goes back to the war of the Canaanite and Emorite tribes (thought but not known to have been Semitic) against the ancient Israelite invaders. According to this reading, the ancient Hebrews were also cultural usurpers, who, in Sa'adeh's words, "arrogated all the Bible stories from the legacy of Babylonia, embraced Canaanite ritual ceremonies, and joined them all together into the Torah." It is indicative that most of Sa'adeh's followers came and continue to come from the Greek Orthodox community, which, following the model of the Slavic church, has always been zealously and explicitly anti-Hebrew in a way that the far larger Catholic and Islamic communities have not. Only during the past decade have a

modest number of Shiites, many of whom oppose the Khomeini leadership, and Druze been drawn to the movement.

The SSNP has displayed astonishing staying power, considering its tribulations and the shattering blow it sustained when Sa'adeh was executed, in 1949, after a fruitless attempt to take over Lebanon which was doomed by delusion from the start. Syria put a stop to SSNP activity by 1956, and the leaders who failed to flee in time were sent to prison. In Jordan, in 1966, King Hussein sent his security services into action to eradicate the party's cells and halt its activities among the Palestinian population. In Lebanon the party received a serious blow in 1961, when in a fit of despair two of its members, company commanders in the Lebanese army, tried to carry off a lightning coup—with the aid of ten tanks—and failed. Almost all the party's known activists remained in prison or exile until a general amnesty in 1969, and there are few among its present leaders who have not known torture and long imprisonment.

Archival documents published in recent years reveal that Sa'adeh and his immediate successors received aid from Western intelligence services. French intelligence in the Levant utilized the SSNP almost from its inception, to undermine the pan-Arab movement in Syria and keep Christian youngsters out of its ranks. The SSNP secretly received money and, occasionally, small arms from the Deuxième Bureau, which also persuaded the French authorities to turn a blind eye to the party's violent actions. In the 1950s the CIA adopted this approach, viewing the SSNP as dubious but nonetheless deserving of support, because it adamantly opposed the vision of Arab unity being promoted by Nasser and it fought leftist movements. Moreover, the SSNP supported the programs then being promoted by the West to forge the unity of the Fertile Crescent as a barrier against Soviet penetration. Thus the SSNP in Lebanon was accorded generous aid in maintaining an armed militia, and this fought alongside the other pro-Western groups in the 1958 Lebanese civil war, which climaxed with the landing of the Marines on the shores of Beirut. In effect, this militia—sporting uniforms similar to those of Nazi storm troopers—prospered with the help of covert American encouragement. It is the forebear of the terrorist cells operating today.

BARELY A DECADE ago the SSNP appeared to be heading swiftly toward demise as a relic of the days when the Arab world was captivated by the figures of Hitler and Mussolini. It is clear today, however, that the third generation of SSNP activists—some of them grandchildren of its founding members—have brought the party back to life. Men who had been forgotten since the 1940s or 1950s have recently reappeared in the role of mentors, political mummies come back to life. Slogans that had long faded or peeled off walls have been restored with fresh paint, and the aura of action that surrounds the SSNP is once again attracting young people to the symbol of the red hurricane.

The road back from oblivion began in 1969, with the release of many SSNP members from Lebanese prisons. At first they were unable to reorganize the party. Without a leader whose authority was accepted by all, Sa'adeh's disciples took to quarreling and often ended up settling their accounts with revolvers. Before long the principle of unconditional obedience had given way to anarchy, and the party underwent three or four schisms from the late 1960s to the early 1980s.

After years of struggle, however, Sa'adeh's heirs essentially agreed to pour their energies into saving the dying party. This is what first prompted an "openness toward the left." In time Marxist jargon began to creep into the movement's publications, and the attitude toward Syria changed appreciably. Hafez al-Assad underwent a dramatic metamorphosis from enemy to ally, because by keeping Syria firmly on its feet he has improved the prospects of establishing Greater Syria at some time in the future. By considering Assad a tool for extending Syria's control over Lebanon and the Palestinians, and removing other impediments to Greater Syria, the SSNP is able to overlook the "scientific socialism" and pan-Arabism at the heart of his political philosophy.

At the same time, rather than try to restore its ties with the United States, the SSNP has turned to the Soviet bloc, primarily Romania but also the USSR directly. Since 1970 it has maintained ties with the radical factions of the PLO and has instructed its members to take part in Palestinian terrorism "on a personal basis." Only recently, however, has the impact of this involvement been fully appreciated. What has mistakenly been regarded as pure Palestinian terror-

ism has in fact frequently been spiked with a strong dose of SSNP venom. Until his death of cancer in exile in Geneva, Sa'adeh's son-in-law, Dr. Fuad Shemali, was one of the moving spirits behind Black September, the PLO group responsible for the murder of eleven Israeli athletes at the Munich Olympics and for the 1972 attack on the American Embassy in Khartoum. Members of another wing of the SSNP, led by Bashir Ubeid (who was murdered by a rival Moslem faction in Beirut in 1979), were active partners with the notorious Carlos and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine in bringing about spectacular hijackings.

In this way the SSNP gradually joined the camps of its erstwhile adversaries. By 1975 the party had been accepted into the coalition of Lebanese left-wing parties that formed around Yasser Arafat. After Arafat's ouster from Beirut, in 1982, the SSNP became a senior partner in the pro-Syrian camp in Lebanon. Radio Damascus even allowed one of the party's more prominent figures to broadcast a regular spot about the path to reaching Greater Syria. Three main factions of the party emerged in the late 1970s, and they are still active today. One, headed by Ina'am Ra'ad, enjoys financial support from Colonel Muammar el-Qaddafi, of Libya. Another, headed by Jubran Juraysh, is closely associated with Syria's air-force intelligence—the main coordinating agency of Assad's intelligence community. A third, smaller wing of the SSNP, headed by a man known as "the Archbishop," still maintains ties with Arafat.

When the Israel Defence Forces captured much of Beirut, in 1982, Ariel Sharon neglected to order a search for SSNP activists, and in recent years the party's militia has gotten back on its feet. Armed with Soviet weapons (courtesy of the Syrians), its members underwent their baptism by fire in the battles waged by Syria against Arafat's forces in Tripoli, in 1983, and against the Phalangist troops in the Shouf Mountains, in 1984. The SSNP also played a role in instigating terrorist actions against the Marines in Beirut, though the actual bombing was perpetrated by Shiites from the Hizballah. The SSNP militia is not a very large one. According to Israeli intelligence, it boasts a total of a few thousand fighters, some of whom are reservists called up only in emergencies. But it has one great advantage over rivals and allies alike: as Christians, its members

enjoy greater freedom of movement both in Lebanon and beyond than Moslems do. Moreover, in contrast to other terrorist forces, it is structured on a rigid hierarchy and exercises iron discipline.

BECAUSE OF ITS unparalleled control over its members, the SSNP has become Syria's most reliable instrument of terror, and it is employed for particularly sensitive and dangerous operations that are beyond the capabilities of the Palestinian terror groups headquartered in Damascus. This was already true five years ago, when President Assad let it be known that he wanted Bashir Gemayel killed before his inauguration as President of Lebanon. A covert SSNP agent, Habib Shartuni, planted a bomb in his sister's apartment; Gemayel was scheduled to speak before a seminar on Phalangist ideology in the basement of the same building. Shartuni is still in custody in Beirut: Gemayel's heirs seem afraid to press for the carrying out of the death sentence passed against him. In mid-1986, when it was in Assad's interest to restrain the members of the Hizballah concentrated in Lebanon's Bekaa Valley, he used a company of SSNP fighters to keep them in line. At about the same time, Georges Ibrahim Abdallah and the members of his family were sent to Western Europe to assassinate diplomats and lay the groundwork for future acts of terrorism there. Abdallah was caught entirely by chance, and his identity as the head of the group that murdered the American military attaché Colonel Charles Robert Ray, in Paris in 1982, came out only during his detention. He and his four brothers deny that they operated in allegiance to the SSNP, claiming that they left the party a number of years ago. But intelligence experts are skeptical of this explanation. Even research by the BBC has found that Abdallah retains his ties with the party, though ostensibly he acted as the head of an independent body.

Through the SSNP, Syrian intelligence is also penetrating the large concentrations of Lebanese emigrés in locations from West Africa to Detroit, exploiting the party's fund-raising and propaganda activities to scout out new recruits. In this way the Syrians are hoping to break free of their dependence on the Palestinian terrorist organizations, which have declined into a state of incessant squabbling and in any case have yet to recover from the disaster follow-



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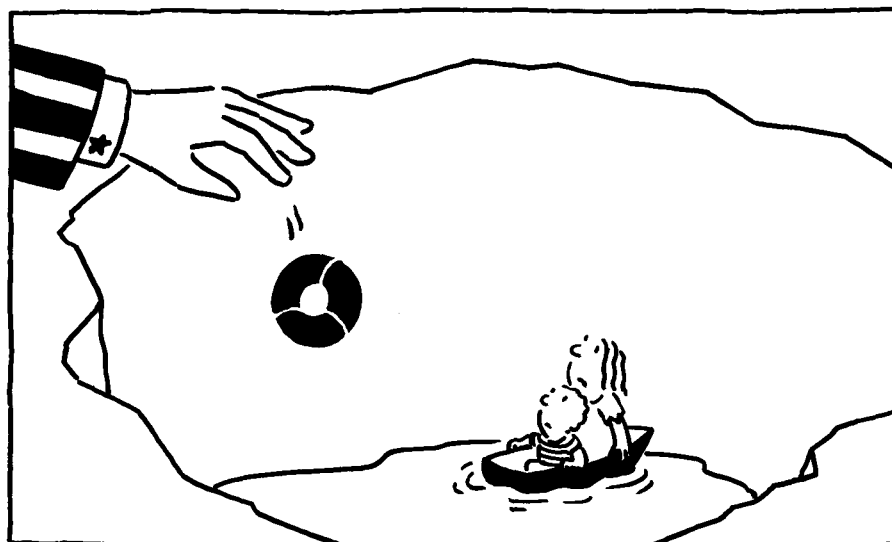
ing the Israeli invasion of Lebanon, Arafat's expulsion from Jordan and Tunis, and the split within the PLO.

In an era when the pan-Arab vision has fallen into eclipse and the doctrine of Arab socialism seems bankrupt, the SSNP offers a formula that sounds both fresh and promising: We are all Syrians, and the remedy for our ills lies not in pan-Arabism or social revolution but in strengthening Syria and extending its borders. In the past few years the SSNP's call has been attended by Lebanese resigned to the loss of their national independence, Palestinians who have despaired of realizing Arafat's slogans, and people from an assortment of sects and minorities in the Middle East. Even some Shiites are turning away from Kho-

meini's preachings about an Islamic revolution to seek refuge in the SSNP, as the Israeli army discovered while contending with the guerrillas in South Lebanon.

This present cooperation with other sects and causes notwithstanding, the heads of the SSNP do not wholly trust Hafez al-Assad (and Assad does not wholly trust them). But they welcome the alliance as an opportunity to work up momentum and gain freedom of action. It matters little that their efforts may not bear fruit for many years to come. Theirs is a movement distinguished by inordinate patience, and they measure its success in historical terms, not by today's headlines.

—Ehud Ya'ari



WASHINGTON THE KEY TO WELFARE REFORM

*Recent history shows
that getting long-term recipients
off the rolls is the only way to reduce
public-assistance costs*

WELFARE IS BAD for you—on that proposition liberals and conservatives now seem to agree. President Ronald Reagan and Senator Edward Kennedy have both recently advanced proposals to cut the relief rolls, and Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan sees “one of those rare alignments that bring about genuine social change” in this new bipartisan consensus. Yet while the Hun-

dredth Congress may well pass legislation affecting welfare, it's unlikely that any reform bill will do much to move welfare recipients from the rolls to the payroll. A look at the history of two key welfare reforms of the Reagan years—the welfare-eligibility restrictions of the 1981 Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act (OBRA) and the creation of the Job Training Partnership Act in 1982—shows why the current proposals may promise more than they can deliver. Both of those reforms also seemed surefire ways to slash the welfare rolls, yet each ended up having little or no practical effect.

Today the relief rolls stand at near record levels despite six years of the Reagan presidency. Some 11 million Americans currently receive payments from Aid to Families with Dependent Children, the main cash-assistance program available to the non-elderly. Roughly 3.7 million families were on the rolls in 1986, near the 1981 all-time high of 3.9

million. Nor was the high number of welfare families last year unusual during the Reagan Administration. More families have been on AFDC in *each* of the past four years than at any previous time, with the exception of 1981. Correspondingly, federal expenditures on AFDC have edged upward, from \$7.8 billion in fiscal year 1982 to \$9 billion in fiscal year 1985. After adjustments for inflation, that amounts to a rise of three percent.

Those numbers don't square with the conventional wisdom about Reagan's cold-blooded budget cuts. In fact most of the President's domestic-program curtailments took place during his first year in office; since then few people have bothered to study their impact. Reagan's OBRA cutbacks are a case in point. Democrats widely denounced them at the outset—yet recent, little-noticed assessments of the regulations' effects indicate that the gloomy prognostications have not come true.

At first the toughened eligibility guidelines appeared to make a real dent in welfare dependency. Generally, they reduced the amount of earned income that could be disregarded in determining AFDC benefits, thereby removing several hundred thousand “working poor” families from the welfare rolls. The General Accounting Office estimated that 442,000 families were cut off AFDC by mid-1984 because of the new rules.

Yet the welfare rolls started rising in 1983, and no one was quite sure why. Unemployment was high, but increases in unemployment have not been closely linked to AFDC caseload growth during the past two decades. The persistence, moreover, of bloated welfare rolls in 1984 and 1985—years when the economy was booming and an unprecedented number of jobs were created—subsequently cast further doubt on the unemployment hypothesis. Divorce, which often pushes women and their children onto relief, remained level, and illegitimacy did not climb more rapidly than it had in previous years.

One possible explanation for the recent increase in dependency is that the Administration's rule changes, which made it harder to mix welfare and work, ultimately enticed mothers with low-paying jobs to go back on welfare. A recent analysis by Robert Moffitt, of Brown University, concludes that women who were combining work and welfare stayed on the job after losing their benefits because of inertia—until a cri-

sis hit. Then, once, say, a child became ill—an emergency that Medicaid typically covers if the mother is on AFDC—the mother reduced her working hours to restore her AFDC eligibility. Since crises of this sort occur only every now and then, Moffitt suggests, the dependency-inducing effect of the OBRA restrictions was delayed.

An equally critical and perhaps more disturbing shortcoming of the 1981 reforms is that they have failed even in the short term to curb the dependency of the hard-core welfare mothers—the women who stay on AFDC for a decade or more at a time. These chronic recipients have become the real source of public concern about welfare in recent years, and rightly so. “There is a difference,” as Senator Moynihan puts it, “between people who have some trouble come into their lives and those whose whole lives are in trouble.” Few taxpayers are outraged by a mother who goes on welfare for eight months because she’s been deserted by her husband or laid off. Many do object, however, to women whose kids grow up seeing that it isn’t necessary to work for a living (or that it’s necessary only rarely). Two million children, most of whom are black, now live in families that have survived on welfare checks for a decade or more.

It is extremely difficult, it turns out, to reduce the welfare budget without getting these chronic users off the rolls. “Any program which fails to help the long-term recipients cannot possibly save much welfare money,” says David Ellwood, of Harvard University’s Kennedy School of Government. Whereas chronic recipients currently make up only a quarter of those who use AFDC, they consume at least 60 percent of its budget. That’s because as the short-termers go on and off the rolls over a period of years, the chronic recipients remain. Thus, at any one time long-term dependents actually constitute the majority of welfare recipients. Getting someone off the dole, in short, is not the crux of the problem—*whom* you get off is.

Unfortunately, OBRA cut off the wrong families. According to a 1984 study by The Urban Institute, it removed from the welfare rolls “those at and near the margin—those most likely to leave anyway. . . leaving behind a relatively ‘hard core’ group of recipients.” A 1986 study by Vicky Albert and Michael Wiseman, of the University of California

at Berkeley, found a marked lengthening of stays on AFDC in California. “OBRA effects appear to have been perverse,” the authors conclude. “Because of OBRA, the state has been left with a more expensive and, in the long run, more dependent caseload.” Ironically, President Reagan defended the cutbacks by saying that they were restricted to better-off recipients, leaving the “truly needy” unharmed in the social safety net. In fact the cutbacks primarily punished a small number of the most industrious welfare mothers. Left unaffected were those whom critics of welfare have always derided as “welfare deadbeats”—the able-bodied women who bear illegitimate children, drop out of high school, and live off relief checks for years at a time.

JUST AS THE Administration’s rewrite of the public-assistance rule book has failed to curb dependency, its efforts to reform work and training programs for welfare mothers have done little to get welfare mothers working. Work programs have never reached more than a small percentage of welfare recipients—and they appear today to be reaching even fewer families than they did when Reagan entered office. And though some small programs seem spectacularly successful—for example, the Reagan Administration’s Job Training Partnership Act—much of that record turns out to be little more than statistical sleight-of-hand.

To date, Administration officials have essentially pursued two approaches to reforming job programs. They sought first to correct the abuses of previous job-training programs; then they created their own program to try to show how it should be done. Correcting perceived abuses led to eliminating funding for the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA)—which had a reputation for sloppy administration and placed participants in temporary public-service jobs, instead of moving them into permanent private positions. Overall, funding for work and training programs was cut 50 percent in real dollars from 1981 to 1986. The main program of job training and placement for welfare recipients—the Work Incentive Program, known as WIN—was reduced even more sharply, from \$365 million in 1981 to \$110 million in 1987. Nationwide the number of welfare recipients trained for jobs is minuscule: it is estimated that WIN moved 130,000 people

off welfare in 1985, or about one percent of those on AFDC. Similarly, the much-touted, proliferating “workfare” programs, which require recipients to work off their welfare benefits in community jobs, are believed to cover about one percent of AFDC recipients.

Besides cutting back, the President sought to make job programs more efficient—WIN recipients should be hustled into jobs, instead of taking college courses that taxpayers’ money pays for; welfare mothers should be induced to read want ads and look for a job, instead of simply sending in an application to city hall and calling it quits.

The no-frills solution developed by the Administration was the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA), which established a program emphasizing quick placement in the private sector by teaching enrollees job-search techniques and offering them short-term training. Although the program is open to the members of various disadvantaged groups, it is clearly meant to reach AFDC mothers, since “reductions in welfare dependency” are a statutory goal of the program. Since the program began, in 1983, it has placed 61 percent of its participants in jobs, and the President has proudly boasted that it has “the highest job-placement record of any of the employment programs the government has ever tried.” He’s right—even though, paradoxically, the program is probably a waste of resources.

The hitch is that the Reagan Administration has never evaluated how similarly situated welfare recipients who did *not* go through the JTPA program fared in finding work, so no one really knows what difference the program makes. For example, JTPA may place 60 percent of its participants—but if 60 percent of similarly situated welfare recipients who do not go through JTPA also find jobs, the program is a waste of money. As conservatives have been quick to point out, the absence of a control group has proved a critical stumbling block to evaluating other job programs, such as Massachusetts’s much-heralded ET initiative. Of course, not knowing whether JTPA made a difference is not the same as knowing that it didn’t—but there’s good reason to believe that it doesn’t do much to reduce dependency. Study after study of the program shows that it achieves its high placement rate by “creaming”—skimming the most talented few off the top. In 1985 only 72,500 AFDC recipients “entered employ-

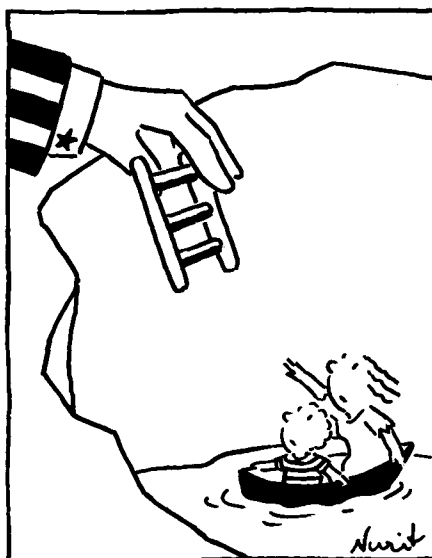
ment" through JTPA (meaning they showed up for at least one day of work). According to the best estimates of the Labor Department, JTPA participants were significantly better educated than the rest of the AFDC population.

Creaming, it should be noted, is not limited to the JTPA program. It is endemic in job programs, because most administrators prefer to help job-ready applicants. Such applicants are often more eager to work, and it's easier to get them hired—enabling the administrator, naturally, to show a high job-placement rate. What the Reagan Administration did, though, was encourage *more* creaming, by tilting federal incentives further away from working with hard-core welfare mothers. For example, the Administration's performance standards offer financial incentives to program managers who can quickly place applicants in private-sector jobs at a low per-slot cost. Women who have been on welfare for a decade or more, however, need more than the shallow but "efficient" support offered through JTPA—a few weeks of training and a lecture about how to shape a résumé aren't enough. Several recent studies of other programs (studies that do use control groups) show that the most disadvantaged welfare recipients—mothers who dropped out of high school, have little or no work experience, and stay on welfare for long periods—benefit the most from employment and training programs. The same studies show that AFDC recipients who are better prepared for the job market—like those who go through the JTPA program—ultimately derive little benefit from work programs. The job-ready candidates would have climbed off welfare without government help.

IN VIEW OF JTPA's shortcomings, diagnosing the ills of current job programs seems easy enough: they've failed to reach enough welfare mothers, and those they have reached have least needed the help. The prescription, consequently, seems equally clear: expand job programs and give priority to serving chronic welfare recipients. But neither the Administration's nor the Democrats' work program under debate in Congress this year would affect the welfare rolls more than marginally. The divide in this year's debate is between those who favor a targeted approach to work programs (generally Democrats) and those who favor a blanket approach (generally Republicans). The problem, it turns out, is

that the targeted approach is not so carefully aimed and the blanket method is not so all-inclusive.

Targeting, whose champions are Ted Kennedy and Augustus Hawkins (the respective chairmen of the Senate and House labor committees), would give chronic welfare mothers priority over job-ready recipients. For example, Kennedy's Jobs for Employable Dependent Individuals (JEDI) program provides financial bonuses to states that train and place AFDC recipients who have been on welfare for at least two years or are young high school dropouts. JEDI passed the Senate last April, 99 to 0, and Kennedy says that it "could be the catalyst for real change in long-term dependency." Yet no one actually knows how to reach hard-core welfare mothers on a



broad scale. The National Governors' Association favors the pre-emptive strike—that is, immediately going after welfare mothers who are candidates for long-term dependency. Suggested reforms include requiring teen mothers to stay in school, mandating immediate work for young unwed mothers, and requiring mothers to seek work as soon as their youngest child turns three.

Reagan's advisers dismiss targeting as the latest academic fad. Robert Carleson, a former Reagan aide now in the private sector, says, "Social scientists always try to categorize people, but you can't sit in your ivory tower in Washington and apply these kinds of demographic distinctions to millions of people around the country. It would be a disaster." Even David Ellwood—who with his colleague Mary Jo Bane has done most of the work analyzing how short-

term and chronic recipients differ—is skeptical. "Targeting which is handled badly can make people feel isolated and stigmatized," he says. "You don't, moreover, want to offer help only to those with the greatest impediments, since that can create the wrong impressions about what is rewarded." As Ellwood points out, setting aside resources for chronic welfare recipients could seem to penalize job-ready welfare recipients who finished high school or have recent work experience.

The only real way to get welfare mothers working, Administration officials assert, is to have a broad, mandatory program. For the past seven years Reagan has proposed, with little success, a national version of a "workfare" program, but Congress is now taking the work-requirement approach more seriously. The Administration's current proposal—the Greater Opportunities Through Work (GROW) program—is easily its most ambitious to date. Previous Administration workfare plans allowed most mothers to beg off if their youngest child was less than six years old. GROW would require mothers with children of six months or more to participate, roughly doubling the number of welfare recipients who would be reached by the program. When the program was fully operational, 60 percent of those eligible would be looking or training for work, finishing high school, or in a workfare slot.

GROW would cast a wider net than Kennedy's JEDI proposal, but it still would reduce dependency only modestly. That's because of the two stumbling blocks that politicians love to ignore when talking about work programs—the price tag and the "dribble-out" phenomenon.

Cost estimates for GROW have left some welfare analysts incredulous. During the first year of the program, when 20 percent of those eligible for GROW would be expected to participate, roughly \$40 million of the money would be for child care. California alone expects to spend twice as much next year on child care for a much smaller group of welfare mothers in its work program. Underestimating the cost of a job program is far more than just a bean-counter's nightmare; as the experience with WIN shows, inadequate funding can hinder efforts to reduce dependency. AFDC family heads, for example, have been "required" to participate in WIN since 1967, but the requirement has

largely been meaningless. Underfunded from the start, WIN typically registers hundreds of thousands of welfare mothers who end up doing nothing, since there is no work or training available through the program. Participation requirements make the paper-shuffling routine worse, since lots of recipients can be served only if the most job-ready mothers are helped. GROW provides similarly perverse incentives for creaming by withholding matching funds for the direct costs of education or training—both of which chronic welfare recipients need to become employable.

Assume, though, for the sake of argument, that GROW's cost estimates are plausible and its incentives flawless. There remains the stumbling block of the dribble-out phenomenon: once job programs get rolling, some people drop out, and simultaneously the number that get exempted seems inevitably to grow. Historically, the most successful job programs have a placement rate of about 65 percent. That means one out of three participants doesn't get a job out of the "best" programs; the person gets sick, finds a job before the program is completed, gets married, or recycles through the program. Meanwhile, those who do see the program through typically fail to make enough money in their training slot or low-wage job to get off welfare. As David Ellwood reports, the most successful programs for poor mothers "boost earnings by perhaps a thousand dollars per year on average, surely not enough to insure self-support." Unlike many mothers of preschoolers, those on welfare typically cannot secure a decent-paying part-time job that will enable them also to care for their children.

These humble results might be dismissed as unrepresentative, part and parcel of the small, inefficient job programs of yesteryear, were it not for the loophole problem. GROW actually would grant far fewer exemptions than other work proposals, including the current proposal from the National Governors' Association. The NGA, for example, would not require mothers with children under three to participate in its work-education initiative—which lets almost 40 percent of all AFDC recipients off the hook before the program begins. By lowering the age of the youngest child to six months for exemption, GROW closes that loophole and purportedly covers 90 percent of the AFDC caseload.

Yet even in GROW the numbers would

still add up: 10 percent of AFDC mothers with infants would be exempt; 40 percent of the people eligible for GROW would not be required to participate when the program was fully implemented. Some people would recycle back into the program after losing a job. Others would participate by getting their high school degree instead of working. The cumulative effect of the loopholes can be seen in the Administration's own projections. By 1992, when the program was fully implemented, 440,000 fewer families would be on welfare because of GROW, either because they had found jobs through the program or because they were deterred by GROW from ever going on AFDC. That's a 12 percent reduction—worthwhile, certainly, but far short of a "simple solution" to the welfare problem.

The modest record of employment initiatives has stirred renewed interest in more-radical solutions. Job-related reforms advocated in recent months have included abolishing AFDC and replacing it with a guaranteed government jobs program; and expanding the use of tax credits, to make it easier for mothers to work part-time without having to rely on AFDC. Recommendations for reforming cash benefits have included shutting off payments to a family after two years, and expanding child-support laws to provide single parents a guaranteed income. A far-reaching overhaul isn't likely in 1987, however, because the political consensus between Republicans and Democrats breaks down when more than philosophical support for job programs is at stake.

What's likely to emerge from the Republican-Democratic tug-of-war in Congress is some tinkering with the cash side of the welfare system, plus a compromise job program that includes more funding for jobs and training, with stiffer obligations for recipients. Should President Reagan win authorization for a series of demonstration projects at the local level, they undoubtedly would produce some useful ideas for curbing welfare dependency. Still, most of the experiments are expected to run for at least five years, so final results wouldn't be available until at least 1992, long after Reagan leaves office. In the meantime, the prospects for mothers to climb off the relief rolls the old-fashioned way—through earnings—remain dim, far dimmer than either Ronald Reagan or Ted Kennedy cares to admit.

—David Whitman



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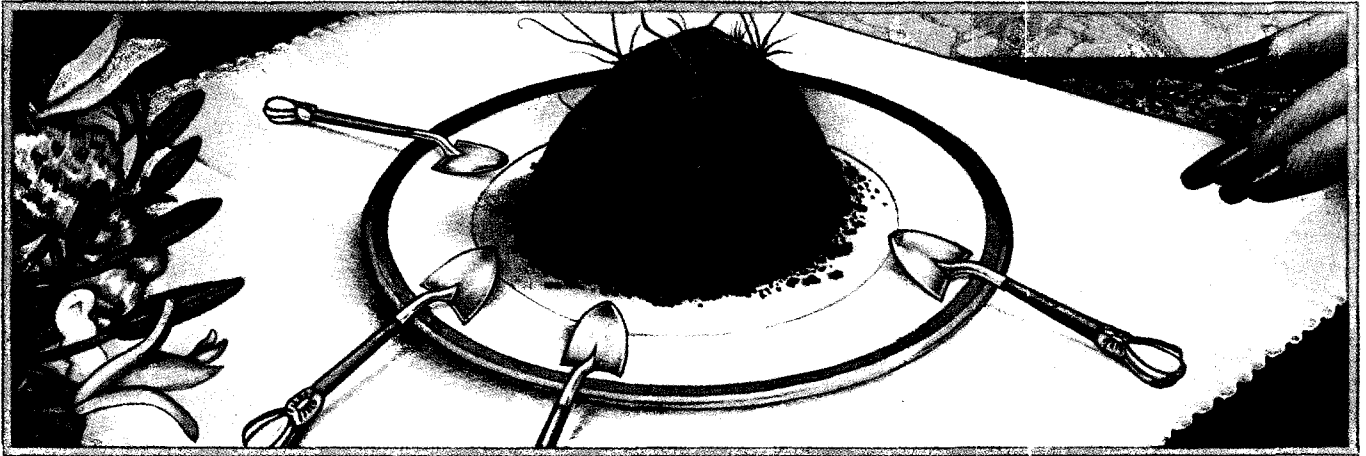
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WHERE THE BODIES ARE BURIED

BY IAN FRAZIER



At long last, the glamorous and poignant saga of Elsa Maxwell is coming to a bookshop near you. . . . "Party Girl: The Elsa Maxwell Story" by Rosemary Kent. . . . "Elsa knew where the bodies were buried," said Kent.

—William Norwich,
in the *New York Daily News*

YOU'RE AT AN intimate dinner party. The guest on your left is under the blacktop driveway of a two-bedroom brick house in Highland Park, Michigan. How do you begin a conversation? I'm a firm believer in the old rule that one must always avoid politics and religion at the dinner table. Try instead to draw your companion out on subjects of general interest—boarded-up closets, for example. Even the dullest guest is likely to have some thoughts about them. If that fails to strike a spark, try air shafts. Chances are, you'll be talking away in no time. If it's a summer party, how about air-conditioning vents? Or, if you happen to be dining outside, the topic of wooded areas might be promising. If none of these seem to appeal, put on your brightest smile and turn to the guest on your right. After all, you've done your best.

What's the perfect time for a party? Any time! The perfect place? The trunk of a 1975 brown Buick LeSabre in a deserted area of the Mill Basin section of Brooklyn! From a fifty-gallon drum at the bottom of the Gulf of sunny Mexico, to the foundations of the art-deco-inspired Chrysler Building, in Manhattan, to a shallow mound of fresh earth in Rambouillet Forest, southwest of ro-

mantic Paris, every successful party requires but one ingredient: people. A dear friend of mine in a field behind her house in Leeds, just 150 feet from her front door, once said to me, "Elsa—" Of course I sympathized completely. All of us may feel a bit apprehensive when we contemplate giving a big social affair. The first thing I do is make a list—something like:

- planter's punch
- crepe-paper streamers
- Nancy and Henry Kissinger
- a crawl space
- four twenty-gallon plastic bags
- pretty girls
- gladiolas by the armful
- a remote fishing-access site
- Bobby Short

Now that I've got the basic outline, I can relax and let my imagination color it in.

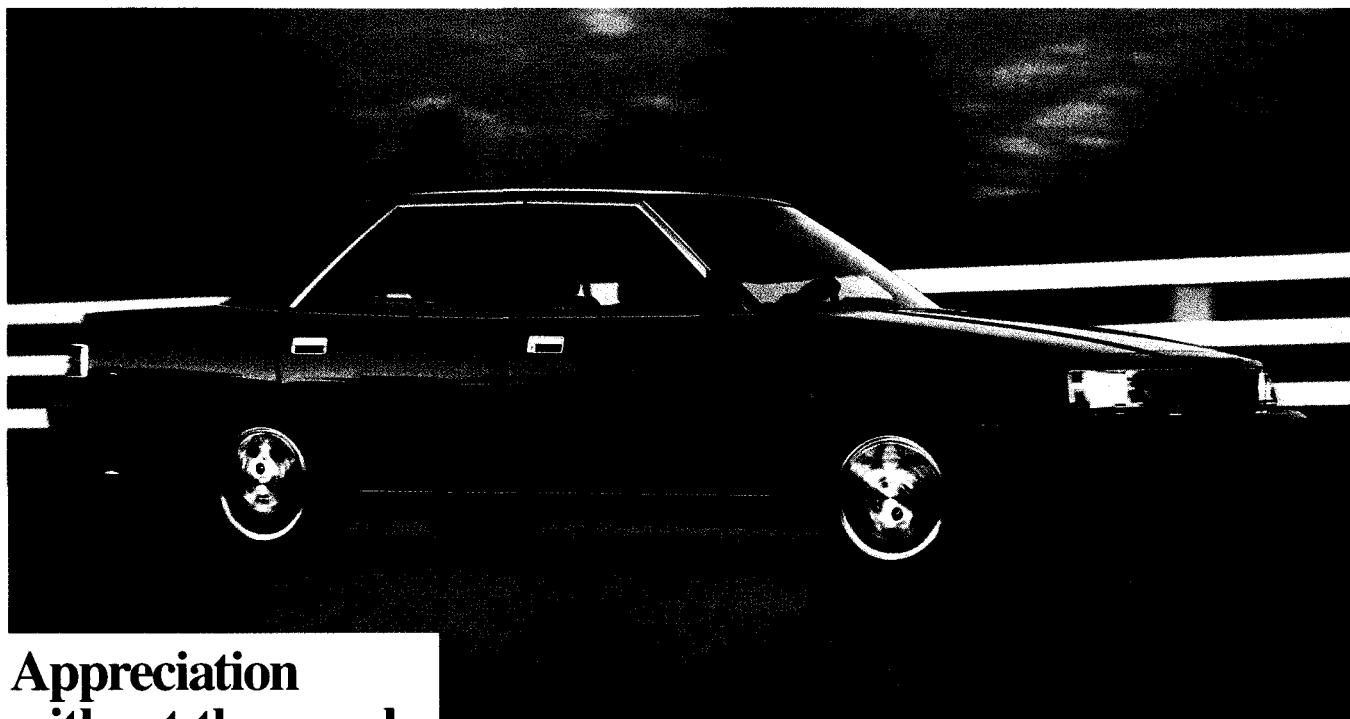
As I once remarked to Consuelo Vanderbilt in an unclaimed crate at the International Arrivals Building at Kennedy Airport, money and titles mean nothing to me. Character, sense of humor, charm, and dental records are what I look for in a guest. To me, a county landfill project full of dukes and millionaires is a county landfill project full of bores. At any gathering it's the mix of personalities that makes things go. If I invite a person from the A list, I make sure to include one from the B list, one from the world of show business, one from a creek in the Bronx, one from the arts, one from a storm drain in Great Neck, and so forth. A varied crowd guar-

antees your party against the horrors of shop talk.

People often ask me, "Is it permissible to wear evening clothes to a gathering in the late afternoon?" "On which side of the salad fork should one place the posthole digger and scrap-metal compactor?" "Is a commercial strength of quicklime sufficient for my entertaining needs?" "Should I require my caterer to provide an estimate in advance?" "What's in the chimney of the pharmacy on North Lincoln Avenue?" "How many cinder blocks should I allow for each unescorted woman?" "What about the narrow passageway separating the building at 684 Ralph Avenue from the adjoining building?" "What is that odd smell?" "Should I examine a double-locked steamer trunk mailed slow freight to a nonexistent address in New Orleans?" "Should I check the refuse bins of a popular theme park? The hold of a burned fishing boat off Craig, Alaska? A vacant lot on Dean Street, between Classon and Grand avenues? A rented room on West Seventy-sixth Street? The bottom of an elevator shaft in an Ozone Park housing project? The tall grass at the entry to the Hutchinson River Parkway near Bruckner Boulevard? Beneath the paving stones in the courtyard of the Via Veneto restaurant in Queens? In the wall of the men's room of a Brooklyn veterans' meeting hall? Under the service bay of a derelict garage in Keansburg, New Jersey?"

I always answer, "Warmer, warmer. Yes, my dears, you are getting warmer all the time." □

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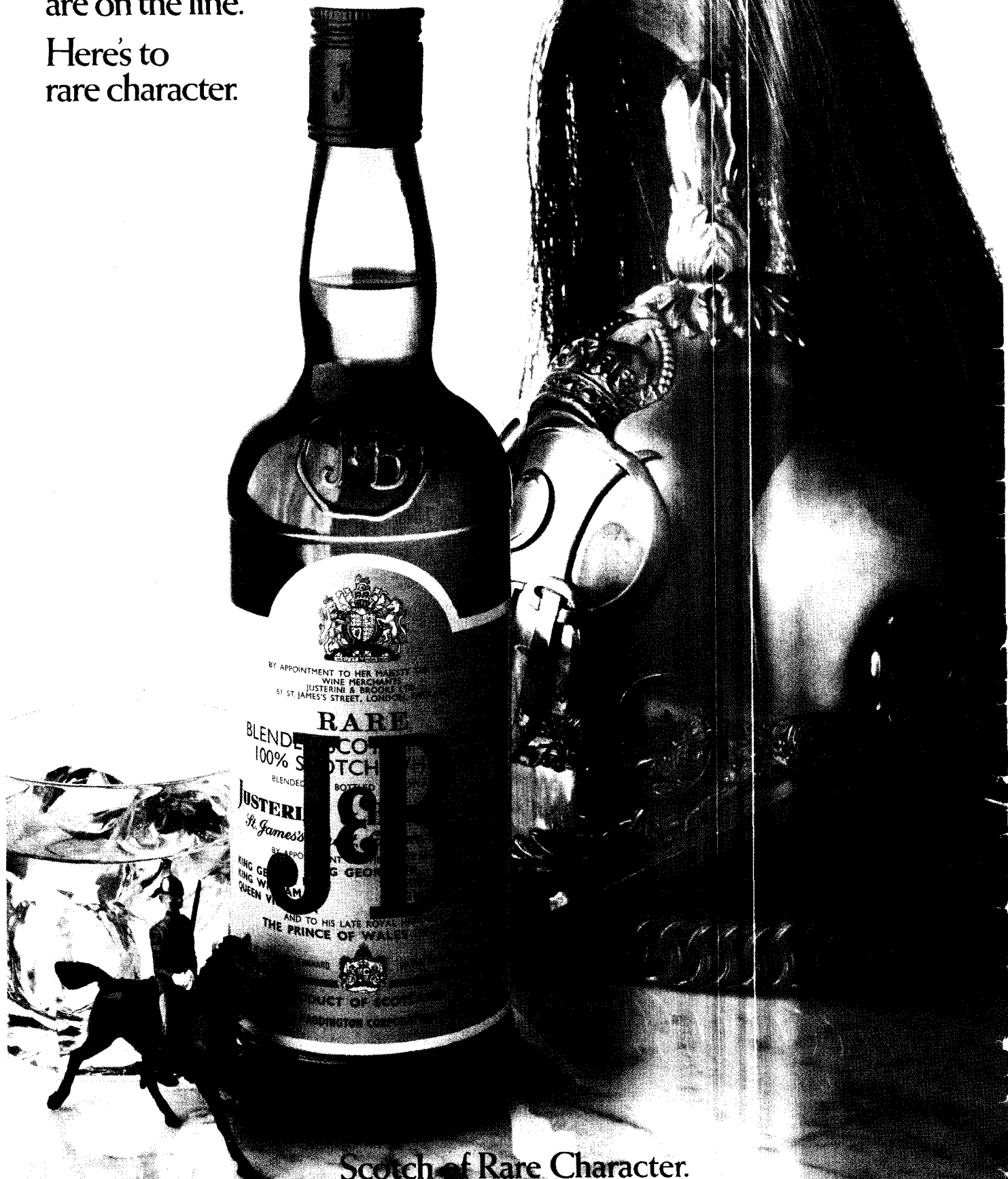
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The problem isn't in the system—it is the system

WHAT GORBACHEV IS UP AGAINST

BY PAUL KENNEDY

Crisis Phenomena

OF ALL THE STATEMENTS MADE BY THE SOVIET leader Mikhail Gorbachev in his two years in office, none has been more candid than the remarkable address that he delivered to the Communist Party's Central Committee last January 27. That six-hour speech not only contained the now customary calls for openness and reform, together with the usual strictures against social corrosion, slackness and inertia in the workplace, crime, alcoholism, and drug abuse; it also proposed a shake-up in the Party itself, charging that the party had failed to see in time "the danger of crisis phenomena in [our] society." Implicitly attacking both the Stalin and the Brezhnev era, Gorbachev bluntly said: "At some point the country began to lose momentum, difficulties and unresolved problems started to rise up, and there appeared elements of stagnation and other phenomena alien to socialism."

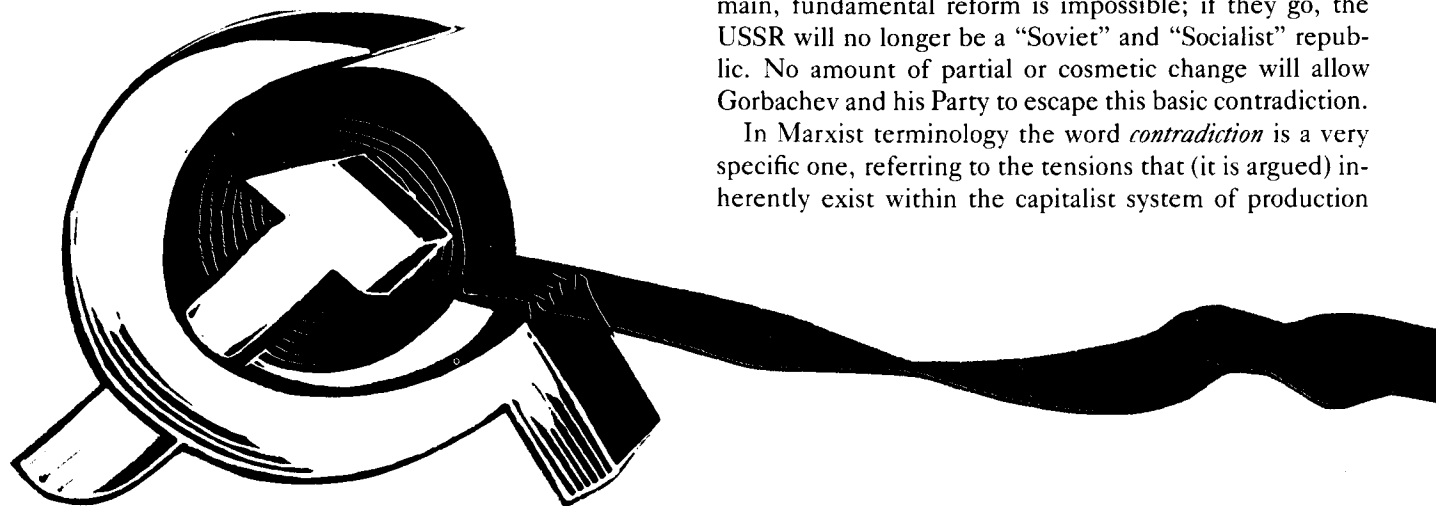
The only way the problems could be attacked at the root, Gorbachev proposed, was by making changes in the Party itself, including the introduction of elections at all levels. To be sure, Gorbachev's notion of "democratization" is hardly one that would be recognized as such in the West, since Soviet voters were to be offered alternative candidates only within the Party structure. Nevertheless, to put the blame on the Party itself for the long-term Soviet malaise—rather than on lazy workers or "anti-socialist attitudes," as previous leaders have tended to do—is inordinately bold. By comparison, Gorbachev's encouragement of artistic expression, his release of dissidents, even

his various proposals about arms control, however important in their own right, are minor, being both less fundamental and more easily reversible under a *dirigiste* regime than would be proposals to amend the way in which that regime was chosen.

That Gorbachev is the most intelligent and dynamic leader of the USSR since Lenin himself can hardly be disputed. That he is very serious in his intention to shake up the Soviet system is also clear. Like his mentor Yuri Andropov, he senses that his country is in an increasingly critical condition; even more than Andropov was, he is willing to experiment in the hope of reforming the system and beating back the "crisis phenomena." This will not involve any abandonment of ultimate authority by the Communist Party leadership; Lenin, for all his shifts of policy, also insisted upon retaining final control. But it does seem to imply an earnest consideration of all possible changes (economic, social, cultural) that might improve the present system. For the next few years, perhaps longer, a great variety of reform proposals will be emanating from Gorbachev and his increasingly influential band of supporters.

WHETHER GORBACHEV CAN EFFECTIVELY REFORM the system *without* abandoning the fundamentals of the Communist ideology is, however, extremely doubtful. The evidence of the past seventy years of Party rule suggests that the real problem is the Leninist system of government and the economy itself. If they remain, fundamental reform is impossible; if they go, the USSR will no longer be a "Soviet" and "Socialist" republic. No amount of partial or cosmetic change will allow Gorbachev and his Party to escape this basic contradiction.

In Marxist terminology the word *contradiction* is a very specific one, referring to the tensions that (it is argued) inherently exist within the capitalist system of production



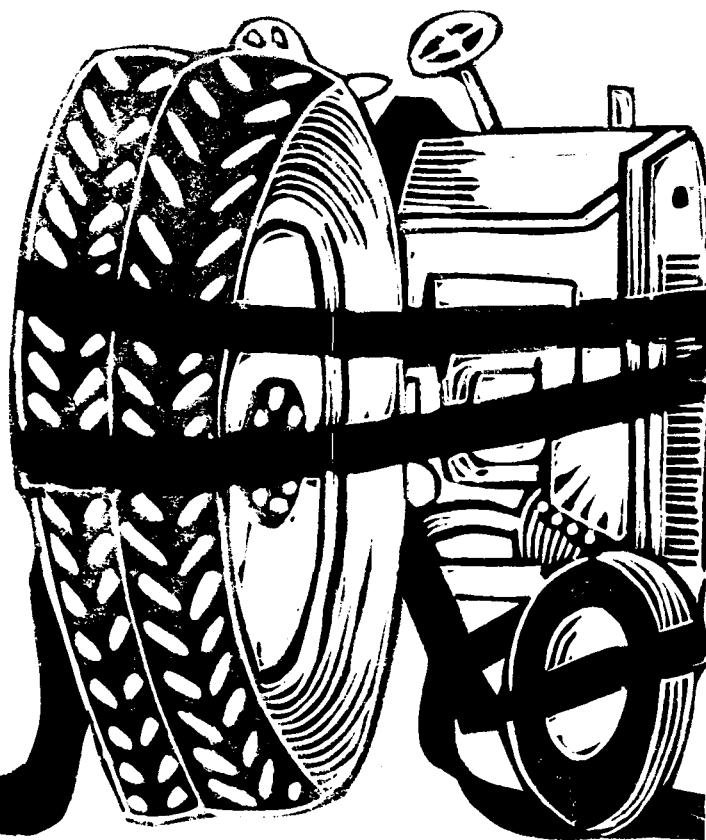
and will inevitably cause its demise. It may therefore seem deliberately ironic to employ the same expression to describe the position in which the Soviet Union, the world's first Communist state, now finds itself. Nevertheless, in a number of absolutely critical areas there seems to be an ever-widening gap between the *aims* of the Soviet state and the *methods* employed to reach them. The state proclaims the need for greater agricultural and industrial output, yet hobbles that possibility by collectivization and heavy-handed planning. It asserts the overriding importance of world peace, yet its enormous arms buildup and its links with "revolutionary" states (together with its revolutionary heritage) serve to increase international tensions. It claims to require absolute security along its extensive borders, yet its unyielding policy toward its neighbors' security concerns worsens Moscow's relations with Western and Eastern Europe, with the Middle East, with China and Japan, and in turn makes the Soviet Union feel "encircled" and *less* secure. Its philosophy asserts that the ongoing, dialectical process of change in world affairs is driven by technology and new means of production, and inevitably causes all sorts of political and social transformations, yet its own autocratic and bureaucratic habits, the privileges that cushion the party elites, the restrictions upon the free interchange of knowledge, and the lack of personal incentive make it horribly ill equipped to handle the explosive but subtle "high-tech" future that is already emerging in Japan and the United States. Above all, while Party leaders frequently insist that the USSR will never again accept a position of military inferiority, and even more frequently urge the nation to increase production, the state has clearly found it difficult to reconcile those two aims and, in particular, to check a Russian tradition of devoting too large a share of national resources to the armed forces—with deleterious consequences for the ability of the USSR to compete commercially with other societies. Perhaps there are other ways of labeling all these problems, but it does not seem inappropriate to term them "contradictions."

Feeding Bread to the Pigs

THE MOST CRITICAL AREA OF WEAKNESS IN THE economy during the entire history of the Soviet Union has been agriculture, which is the more amazing when it is recalled that a century ago Russia was one of the two largest grain exporters in the world. Yet since the early 1970s the Soviet Union has needed to import tens of millions of tons of wheat and corn each year. If world food-production trends continue, the USSR and certain other socialist nations of Eastern Europe will share with several African and Middle Eastern countries the un-

enviable distinction of having changed from being net food exporters to being importers on a large scale and in a sustained way. In the Soviet Union's case, this embarrassing stagnation in agricultural output has not been for want of attention or effort; since Stalin's death every Soviet leader has pressed for increases in food production, in order to meet consumer demand and to fulfill the promises of rises in the Soviet standard of living. It would be wrong to assume that rises have not occurred; clearly, the average citizen is much better off now than he was in 1953, when his situation was desperate. But after some decades of drawing closer to that of the West, the standard of living is falling behind again—despite all the resources that the state commits toward agriculture, which swallows up nearly 30 percent of total investment (versus five percent in the United States) and employs more than 20 percent of the labor force (versus three percent in the United States). Merely in order to maintain standards of living, the USSR is compelled to invest approximately \$78 billion in agriculture each year *and* to subsidize food prices by a further \$50 billion. It seems to be moving further away from being the agricultural exporter it once was, and must pour out still more billions of hard currency for grain and meat imports to make up its shortfalls in agricultural output.

There are, it is true, certain natural reasons for the precariousness of Soviet agriculture, and for the fact that its per capita production is about *one seventh* that of American



farming. Although the USSR is often regarded as geographically similar to the United States—both are continent-wide Northern Hemisphere states—it actually lies much farther to the north: the Ukraine is on the same latitude as southern Canada. This makes it difficult to grow corn, and even the Soviet wheat-growing regions endure far colder winters, and are subject to more frequent droughts, than states like Kansas and Oklahoma. The four years 1979 to 1982 were particularly bad in that respect, and so embarrassed the government that it stopped giving details of agricultural output (although estimates that it imported 35 million tons of grain, on average, each year provided a clue). Even the “good” year of 1983 did not make the USSR self-sufficient—and it was followed by yet another disastrous year of cold and drought. Moreover, any attempt to increase production by extending wheat acreage into the “virgin lands” is constricted by frosts in the north and aridity in the south.

Nevertheless, outside observers are not convinced that climate alone has depressed Soviet agricultural output. By far the biggest problems are caused by the socialization of agriculture. To keep the populace happy, food prices are held artificially low through subsidies, so that meat costing the state four dollars a pound to produce sells for eighty cents a pound. Such a system makes it cheaper for peasants to buy bread and potatoes for their livestock than to feed them unprocessed grain. Vast amounts of state investment in agriculture are thrown at large-scale projects (dams, drainage) rather than invested in the barns or up-to-date small tractors that ordinary peasants might want. Decisions as to planting, investment, and so on are taken not by those who work the fields but by managers and bureaucrats. The denial of responsibility and initiative to individual peasants is probably the single greatest reason for disappointing yields, chronic inefficiencies, and enormous waste. The waste is also due to inadequate storage facilities and the lack of year-round roads, which, according to Professor Marshall Goldman, of Harvard University’s Russian Research Center, an expert on Soviet economics, causes approximately 20 percent of the grain, fruit, and vegetable harvest, and as much as 50 percent of the potato crop, to be spoiled. What could be done if the system were fundamentally altered—that is, away from collectivization and toward individual peasant-run farming—is indicated by the fact that existing private plots produce around 25 percent of Soviet crops yet occupy a mere four percent of the country’s arable land.

Whatever the noises about reform from the highest levels, however, the indications are that the Soviet Union is not contemplating large-scale agricultural changes to anything like the extent of Deng Xiaoping’s recent “liberalization” measures in China, even though it is clear that Soviet

grain output is falling far behind that of its adventurous neighbor.

Although the Kremlin is unlikely to explain openly why it will make only marginal improvements in the present system of collectivized agriculture, despite the system’s manifest inefficiencies, two reasons for this inflexibility stand out. The first is that an enormous extension of private plots, the creation of many more private markets, and increases in the prices paid for agricultural produce would mean significant rises in the peasantry’s share of national income—to the detriment of the resentful urban population and, perhaps, of industrial investment.

Second, fundamental reform would mean a decline in the power of the bureaucrats and managers who run Soviet agriculture, and would have implications for all other spheres of decision-making. If it is obvious that “individual farmers making day-to-day decisions in response to market signals, changing weather, and the conditions of their crops” can manage agriculture far better than any “centralized bureaucracy, however competently staffed,” what might that imply for the future of the centralized bureaucracy? In its impressive wide-ranging survey of global trends in agriculture, the Worldwatch Institute’s publication *State of the World 1986*, from which I have quoted above, came to the conclusion that there appeared to be a consistent, embarrassing relationship between socialism and national food deficits, and that fact can hardly have escaped the Politburo’s attention. But from its own perspective, it may seem better—safer, certainly—to maintain “socialist” (collectivized) farming, even if that implies rising food imports, than to admit the failure of the Communist system and to remove the existing controls on so large a segment of society.

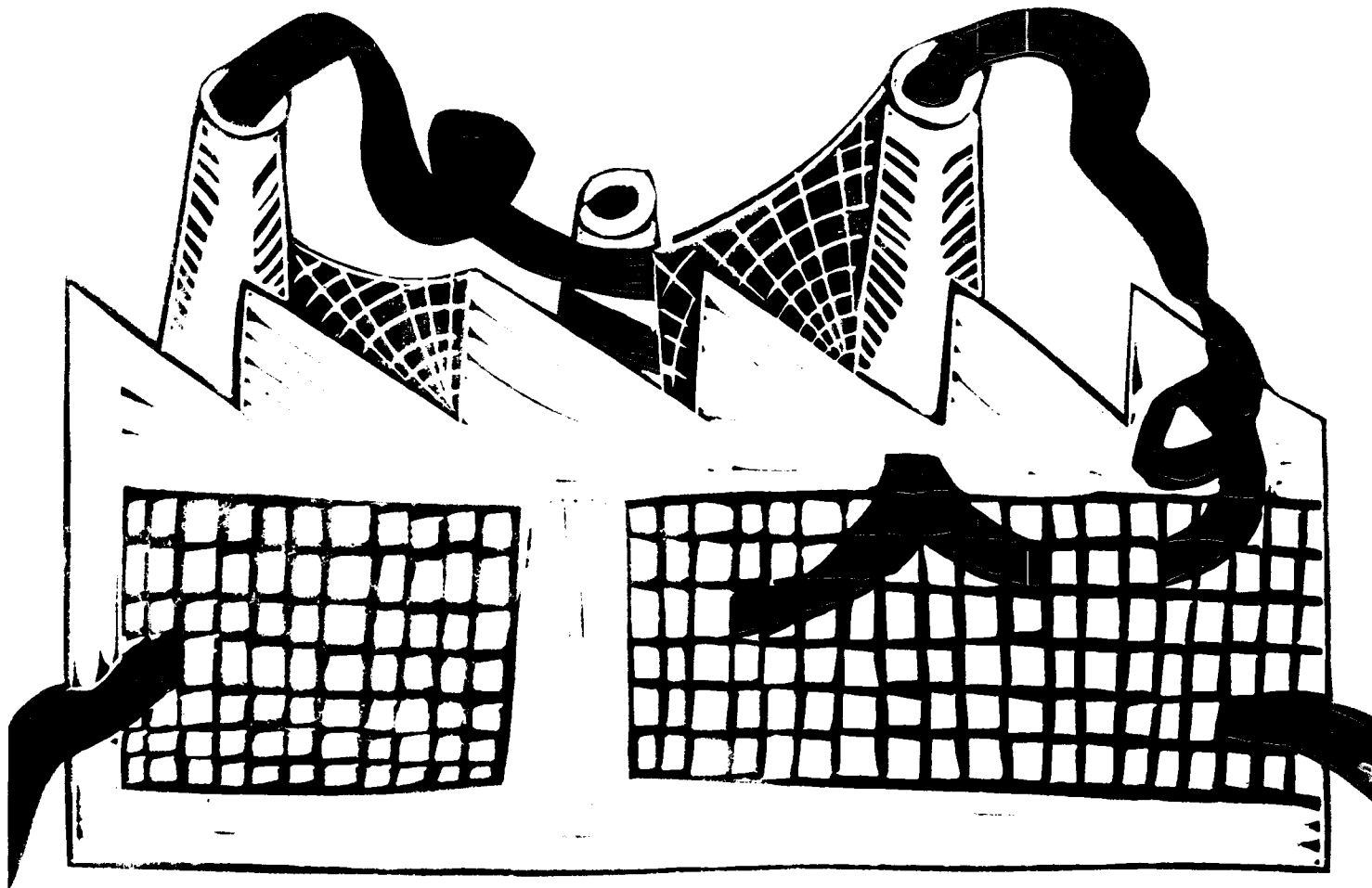


Industrial Plenty, Consumer Poverty

BY THE SAME TOKEN, IT IS DIFFICULT FOR THE USSR to amend its industrial sector. To some observers, it may hardly seem necessary for it to do so, given the remarkable achievements of the Soviet economy since 1945 and the fact that it outproduces the United States in, for example, machine tools, steel, cement, fertilizers, and oil. Yet there are many signs that Soviet industry, too, is stagnating, and that the period of relatively easy expansion—made possible by fixing ambitious output targets and then devoting masses of money and manpower to meeting those figures—is coming to a close. This is owing in part to increasing labor and energy shortages, which will be discussed below. Equally important, however, are the signs that manufacturing suffers from an excess of bureaucratic planning, from being too much concentrated upon heavy industry, and from being unable to respond either to consumer choice or to the need to alter products to meet new demands or markets. Being among the world's leading producers of cement is not necessarily a good thing if excessive investment in that industry takes resources from a more needy sector, if the cement-production process is very wasteful of energy, if the final product has to be transported long distances across the country, further straining the overworked railway system, and if the cement itself has to be distributed among the thousands of building

projects that Soviet planners have authorized but the nation has never been able to complete. The same holds true for the enormous Soviet steel industry, much of whose output seems to be wasted—causing Robert V. Daniels, among other scholars, to marvel at the “paradox of industrial plenty in the midst of consumer poverty.” There are, to be sure, some efficient sectors in Soviet industry (usually related to defense, which can command large resources and must seek to be competitive with the West), but the overall system suffers from concentrating on production regardless of market prices and consumer demand. Since Soviet factories cannot go out of business, they also lack the ultimate stimulus to produce efficiently. However many tinkering there are to speed industrial growth, it is difficult to believe that they will produce a sustained breakthrough if the existing system of a planned economy remains more or less intact.

If today's levels of Soviet industrial efficiency are scarcely tolerable, the system is likely to be damaged even more by three further pressures on it. The first of these concerns energy supplies. It has become increasingly obvious that the great expansion in Soviet industrial output since the 1940s depended heavily on prolific supplies of coal, oil, and natural gas, almost without regard to cost. Consequently, the “energy waste” and “steel waste” in the USSR and its chief satellites is extraordinary, compared with that in Western Europe:



Kilos of (a) coal equivalent and (b) steel used to produce \$1,000 worth of GDP in 1979–1980

	(a)	(b)
USSR	1,490	135
East Germany	1,356	88
Czechoslovakia	1,290	132
Hungary	1,058	88
Britain	820	38
West Germany	565	52
France	502	42
Switzerland	371	26

[Source: *The Economist*, July 6, 1985]

In the USSR's case this misuse of inputs perhaps seemed tolerable when its energy supplies were plentiful and (relatively) easily accessible; but the awful fact is that they no longer are. The CIA's famous 1977 forecast that Soviet oil production would soon peak and then rapidly decline may have been premature; however, Soviet oil output did drop a little in 1984 and 1985, for the first time since the Second World War. More alarming still is the fact that the remaining (and very considerable) stocks of Soviet oil and natural gas are to be found at much deeper levels or in regions, such as western Siberia, where the harsh climate makes living conditions and transportation difficult. As Gorbachev reported in 1985, the cost of extracting an additional *tonne* of Soviet oil had risen by 70 percent over the past decade, and the problem was, if anything, intensifying. This energy problem is related to the USSR's preference for building up nuclear-power output as swiftly as possible, in order to double the nuclear share of electricity production (from 10 percent to 20 percent) by 1990. It is too soon to know how much the disaster at the Chernobyl plant will hurt those plans—the four reactors at Chernobyl produced one seventh of all Soviet nuclear-generated electricity, and even their temporary shutdown implies an increased use of other fuel stocks—but obviously, it will both increase costs (owing to additional safety measures) and reduce the pace of the development of the industry. Finally, the energy sector already absorbs about 35 percent of all industrial investment capital, and the proportion is bound to rise sharply, with serious implications elsewhere. In other words, the overall pattern is clear: merely to keep the economy growing at a modest pace, the energy sector will require an increased share of GNP.

Equally problematic, from the viewpoint of the Soviet leadership, is the challenge posed in the high-technology areas of robotics, supercomputers, lasers, optics, telecommunications, and so on, where the USSR is in danger of falling increasingly behind the West. In the narrower,

strictly military sense, there is the threat that “smart” battlefield weapons and advanced detection systems could neutralize the USSR's quantitative advantages in military hardware. For example, supercomputers might be able to decrypt Soviet codes, to locate submarines deep in the ocean, to monitor a fast-moving battle scene, and to protect American nuclear bases (as implied in President Reagan's Star Wars program), while sophisticated radar, laser, and guidance-control technology might allow Western aircraft and artillery-rocket forces to locate and destroy enemy planes and tanks with impunity—as Israel's forces regularly do to Soviet-made Syrian weapons systems. Merely to keep up with these advanced technologies requires ever larger allocations of scientific and engineering resources to the defense-related sector.

In the civilian field the problem is even greater. Given the limitations that are being reached in such classic inputs as labor and capital investment, high technology is rightly perceived as being vital for increasing output. To give but one example, the large-scale use of computers could greatly reduce waste in the discovery, production, and distribution of energy supplies. Yet the adoption of this new technology not only implies heavy investments (taken from where?) but also challenges the intensely secretive, bureaucratic, and centralized Soviet system. Computers, word-processors, and telecommunications equipment, tools of a knowledge-intensive industry, can best be exploited by a society with a technologically trained population that is encouraged to experiment freely and to exchange new ideas and hypotheses. However, what works well in the United States and Japan threatens to loosen the Soviet state's monopoly on information. If even today senior scientists and scholars are reluctant to use copying machines (the copying departments are staffed by the KGB), then it is hard to see how the country could move toward the widespread use of word-processors, interactive computers, electronic mail, and so forth without a substantial relaxation of police controls and censorship. As in agriculture, therefore, the regime's commitment to “modernization” and its willingness to allocate additional resources of money and manpower are vitiated by an economic substructure and a political ideology that are basic obstacles to change.

The increasing reliance of the Soviet Union on imported technologies and machinery—whether legally traded or stolen—is a less fundamental if still serious problem. The extent of the industrial and scientific espionage—be it for military or for commercial purposes—can obviously not be quantified, but it seems to be yet another indication of the Soviets' worry that they are falling behind. Regular trade—importing Western technology and also Eastern European manufactures in exchange for Russian raw materials—is one way in which the country has traditionally

sought to "close the gap"; such efforts were made under Peter the Great, in the pre-1914 period, and again in the 1920s. In that sense, all that has changed is the nature of the imports: oil-drilling machinery, rolled steel, pipe, computers, machine tools, equipment for the chemical and plastics industry, and so forth. What must be much more worrying to Soviet planners is the accumulating evidence that the imported technology takes longer to set up, and is used much less efficiently, than in the West.

Another problem is the availability of hard currency for the purchase of such technology. This could formerly be circumvented by importing manufactured goods from fellow COMECON countries (thus losing no hard currency), but although they still have to be imported, in order to prevent the collapse of East European economies, COMECON countries' products have increasingly failed to keep up with those from the West. And whereas the USSR has traditionally paid for a large proportion of Western imports through the barter or direct sale of surplus oil, its prospects (and those of Eastern Europe) may be hurt by uncertainties in world oil prices, its own growing energy needs, and the general change in the terms of trade for raw materials as manufacturing processes become more sophisticated. At the same time that Soviet earnings from oil and other raw materials (except, presumably, gas) have shrunk, payments for a variety of imports have remained high, presumably reducing the sums available for investment. Little wonder that Moscow is willing to cooperate with OPEC producers in driving the world-market price of oil up to its 1979 levels.

Hordes of Uzbekis

THE THIRD MAJOR CAUSE FOR CONCERN ABOUT THE Soviet Union's future economic growth lies in demographics. The prognosis here is so gloomy that one Western expert, Murray Feshbach, of Georgetown University's Center for Population Research, began his recent survey of the Soviet population and labor force with the following blunt statements:

On any basis, short-term or long-term, the prospects for the development of Soviet population and manpower resources until the end of the century are quite dismal. From the reduction in the country's birth rate to the incredible increase in the death rates beyond all reasonable past projections; from the decrease in the supply of new entrants to the labor force, compounded by its unequal regional distribution, to the relative aging of the population, not much glimmer of hope lies before the Soviet Government in these trends.

All of these trends are serious, and they interact, but the most shocking has been the steady worsening in life ex-

pectancy and infant-mortality rates since the 1970s and perhaps earlier. Because of a slow erosion in hospital services and general health care, poor standards of sanitation and public hygiene, and fantastic levels of alcoholism, death rates in the Soviet Union have increased, especially among working males. According to some calculations, the average Soviet man can now expect to live for only about sixty years—some six years less than he could in the mid-1960s. Nearly as shocking has been the rise in infant mortality (the USSR is the only industrialized country where such a rise has occurred), to a rate three times that in the United States—despite the enormous number of Soviet doctors. Yet as the population is dying off faster, the birthrate is slowing down sharply—presumably because of urbanization, greater female participation in the work force, poor housing conditions, and other disincentives to have a family. The birthrate has dropped most among the Russian population of the country, with the consequence that the male Russian population of the country is barely increasing at all.

The implications of all this have disturbed the Soviet leaders for some time, and are obviously behind exhortations to increase family size, a strict campaign against alcoholism, and efforts to persuade older workers to remain in the factories. These implications include, first, that the country clearly requires a larger proportion of resources to be devoted to health care and social security, especially as the average age increases: in this the USSR is no different from other industrialized countries. Second, there are the effects on Soviet industry and the armed services, given the drastic fall-off in the rate of growth of the labor force: according to Feshbach's projections, in the decade 1980 to 1990 the labor force will enjoy a net increase of only 5,990,000 persons, whereas the increase in the labor force during the preceding ten years has been estimated at 24,217,000. Leaving the military's problems until later, we are reminded that a very large part of the growth in Soviet industrial output from the 1950s to the 1970s was due to the growth of the labor force, rather than to increases in efficiency. From now on economic expansion will be unable to rely upon a fast-increasing work force in manufacturing. To a considerable extent, of course, this difficulty could be overcome if more able-bodied people were released from agriculture; but an excessive number of youths in the Slavic areas have already left the farming communes for the cities, whereas the surplus that does exist in the non-Slavic republics is less educated, often has little knowledge of the Russian language, and would require an immense investment in training for industry. Third, since the population growth rates in Central Asian republics like Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan are three times as high as those among the Slavic and Baltic peoples, a major shift in the

long-term population balance is under way. The Russian share is expected to decline from 52 percent of the population in 1980 to 48 percent by 2000. For the first time in the history of the USSR, Russians will not be in the majority.

This catalogue of difficulties may seem too gloomy to some commentators. Military-related production in the USSR is often impressive and is constantly driven to improve, because of the dynamic of the arms race. It would be a mistake to paint an altogether negative picture, especially in light of Soviet economic achievements over the past half century; and it has been a habit among Western observers to exaggerate Soviet strengths in one period and weaknesses in the next. Nevertheless, however much the USSR has progressed since Lenin's time, the awkward facts are that it has not caught up with the West and, indeed, that the gap in real standard of living seems to have widened since the later years of the Brezhnev regime; that it is being overtaken, by all measures of per capita output and industrial efficiency, by Japan and certain other Asian countries; and that a slowdown in its growth rates, an aging population, and difficulties with climate, energy stocks, and agriculture, cast a dark shadow over the claims and exhortations of the Soviet leadership.

It is in this context that Gorbachev's assertion that "ac-

celeration of the country's socio-economic development is the key to all our problems" must be understood. And yet, quite apart from natural difficulties, two main political obstacles stand in the way of taking a "leap forward" on the Chinese model. The first, already referred to, is the entrenched position of Party officials, bureaucrats, and other members of the elite, who enjoy an array of privileges that cushion them from the hardships of everyday life in the Soviet Union, and who monopolize power and influence. To decentralize the planning and pricing system, to free the peasants from communal controls, to allow managers of factories greater freedom of action, to offer incentives for individual enterprise rather than Party loyalty, to close outdated plants, to refuse to accept shoddy products, and to allow a freer circulation of information would be seen by those in power as a dire threat to their positions. Exhortations, more-flexible planning, new investments in this or that sector, and disciplinary drives against alcoholism and "decadent" youth styles are one thing; but all proposed changes, Soviet Party officials have stressed, must take place "within the framework of scientific socialism" and without "any shifts toward a market economy or private enterprise." In the opinion of Leonard Silk, a business columnist for *The New York Times*, "the Soviet economy needs its inefficiencies to remain Soviet"; that is to say, far from "stagnation" being "alien to socialism," as the Soviet leader claimed in his January speech, the reverse might be true. If that is so, Gorbachev's speeches about the need for a "profound transformation" of the system are unlikely to make much impact upon long-term growth rates.

The Burden of Defense

ALL THIS WOULD BE GRIM ENOUGH IF THE USSR WERE a country devoted to neutral, pacific policies, like Switzerland or Austria, and had to deal with reform only from a domestic viewpoint. But it has followed the czarist tradition of devoting a great deal of wealth to the armed forces and of being obsessed with national security. The implication of this is *not* that the military is against modernizing and increasing the efficiency of the Soviet economy; on the contrary, certain of the military leaders have openly expressed their worry that science and technology in the USSR may be falling behind those in rival countries—with dire consequences for the future effectiveness of the armed services. The real problem is that because of the geopolitical and strategic difficulties that it believes are facing the Soviet Union, the military has claimed an extremely high proportion of national resources and would be unwilling to see that share decline, even if, as we have seen above, there is an aching need for the reallocation of monies into civilian technology, com-



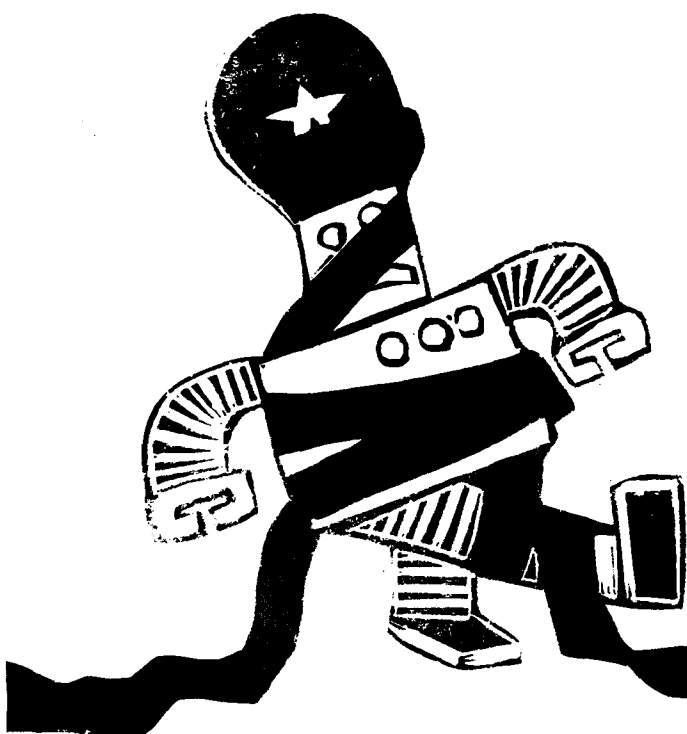
munications, health care, and so on. Reform of a system is always easier when there is money to pay for it; when there is not, it frequently remains only an aspiration.

In other words, the second practical obstacle to Gorbachev's goal of improving national efficiency lies in the very significant share of GNP that the USSR devotes to defense. How best to calculate the totals, and how they compare with Western defense spending, has exercised many analysts; the CIA's 1976 announcement that the ruble prices of Soviet weaponry were twice as high as previously estimated—and that the Soviets were probably spending 11 to 13 percent of GNP on defense, rather than six to eight percent—led to all sorts of misinterpretations. But the exact figures (which may be unavailable even to Soviet planners) are less significant than the fact that although the growth in armaments spending slowed down in 1977, the Kremlin appears to have subsequently allocated around twice as much of the country's GNP to this area as has the United States, even under Reagan's arms buildup. This in turn means that the Soviet armed forces have siphoned off vast stocks of trained manpower, scientists, machinery, and capital investment that could have been devoted to the civilian economy. Nevertheless, this probably does not mean that a large reduction in defense expenditures would quickly lead to a great surge in the Soviet Union's growth rates, simply because it would take a long time to, say, retool a T-72 tank assembly factory to do something else. However, if the arms race with NATO over the rest of this century drove up the share of Soviet defense spending from 14 percent to 17 percent or more of GNP by the year 2000, a larger and larger amount of equipment, such as machine-building and metal-working tools,

would be consumed by the military, crowding out industry from the investment capital it needs.

Like every great power, the USSR has to make choices in its allocations of national resources among the following: the requirements of the military (which has a built-in ability to articulate the nation's security needs); the increasing desire of the populace for consumer goods and better living and working conditions, not to mention improved social services to check the high death and sickness rates; and the needs of agriculture and industry for fresh capital investment, in order to modernize the economy, increase output, keep abreast of the advances of others, and in the long term satisfy both the defense and the social requirements of the country. Such choices are difficult—yet one has the sense that, however pressing the needs both of the Soviet consumer and of the economy, Moscow's traditional obsession with military security means that the military share will not decline—unless, of course, international relations improve dramatically. Gorbachev will need to perform a political miracle to alter the age-old tradition that guns must come before butter and, if need be, before economic growth as well. This makes the USSR basically different from Japan and Western Europe, and even from China and the United States, all of which devote a significantly lower share of GNP to defense.

The Kremlin today follows the historical tradition of the Romanovs, and, indeed, of Stalin, in its desire to have armed forces equal to (and preferably larger than) those of any other power. There is no doubt that at first sight the military strength of the USSR is extremely imposing. To try to establish a realistic total for current annual Soviet defense expenditures would probably be fruitless. On the one hand, Moscow's official figures are absurdly low, concealing large amounts of defense-related spending under other headings (science, the space program, internal security, civil defense, and construction). On the other hand, Western estimates of the real total are complicated by the artificial dollar-ruble exchange rate, limited understanding of Soviet budgetary procedures, the difficulties in, say, the CIA's effort to put a "dollar cost" on Soviet-made weapons or manpower costs, and institutional-ideological biases. What is not in question, however, is the large-scale modernization that has occurred in all branches of the Soviet armed forces, both nuclear and conventional, on land, at sea, and in the air. Whether one considers the rapid growth of Soviet land- and sea-based strategic missile systems, the thousands of aircraft and tens of thousands of main battle tanks, the extraordinary development of the surface navy and the submarine fleet, or the specialist activities (airborne and amphibious warfare units, chemical warfare, intelligence and "disinformation" activities), the picture is impressive. It may or may not have cost as much in real



terms as the Pentagon's programs, but it undoubtedly gives the USSR a range of military capabilities that only the United States can match. This is not a twentieth-century military Potemkin village, ready to collapse at the first serious testing.

From the viewpoint of the Soviet armed services, however, this allocation of resources is by no means excessive. On the contrary, considering the security tasks facing the Soviet military, those weapons systems and military personnel are barely adequate. More worrying still are the indications of long-term problems confronting Soviet military planners. As I hope to make clear in the discussion that follows, the nature of those security tasks and long-term problems seriously limits Gorbachev's freedom to help the civilian economy by making major cuts in defense expenditures.

The Soviet war machine is clearly not an omnipotent force, able to execute with consummate efficiency all the military operations that the Kremlin might require of it. Certain of its weaknesses derive directly from the poor economic and demographic prospects of the Soviet state, which have been outlined above. The first is technological. Since Peter the Great's time Russia seems to have enjoyed its greatest military advantage vis-à-vis the West when the pace of weapons technology has slowed enough to permit a standardization of equipment and thus of fighting units and tactics—whether that be the eighteenth-century infantry column or the mid-twentieth-century armored division. Whenever an upward spiral in weapons technology has placed an emphasis upon quality rather than quantity, however, the Russian advantage has diminished. While it is clearly true that Russia has substantially closed the technological gap with the West that existed in czarist times, and that its military enjoys unrivaled access to the scientific and productive resources of a state-run economy, there is nonetheless evidence of significant lag times in a very large number of technological processes.

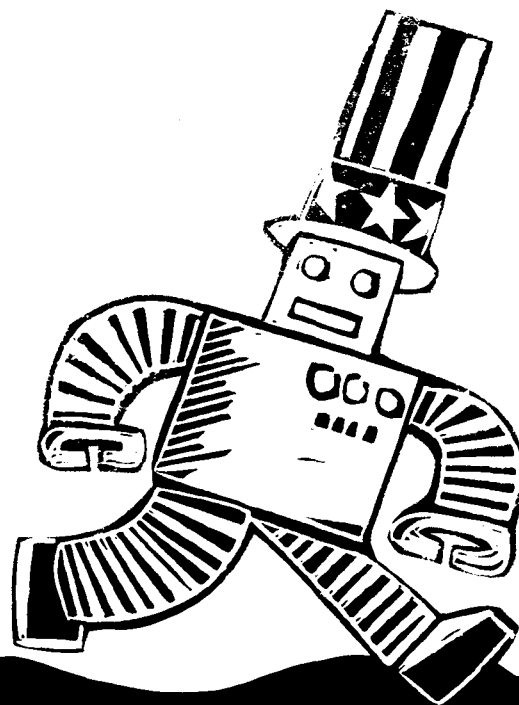
There are two signs of Soviet unease with the technological status quo. The first has to do with the way in which Soviet weaponry has repeatedly been outclassed by American weaponry in the surrogate battles that have taken place in the Middle East and elsewhere over the past few decades. Admittedly, the quality of North Korean, Egyptian, Syrian, and Libyan pilots and tank crews was never very high, but even if it had been, there are grounds to doubt that they could have prevailed against the far superior avionics, radar equipment, and miniaturized guidance systems of American weapons. Western experts on the Soviet military report a constant effort to upgrade quality and to produce—a few years later—"mirror images" of U.S. weapons systems. But this effort draws Soviet planners into the same vortex that threatens Western defense

programs: more sophisticated equipment requires much longer building times, more-time-consuming maintenance, more spare parts, heavier (usually) and vastly more expensive (always) hardware, and a smaller force. This is not a comforting trend for a power that has traditionally relied upon large numbers of weapons to carry out its various and disparate strategic tasks.

The second sign of Soviet unease about technological obsolescence relates to the Strategic Defense Initiative of the Reagan Administration. It is difficult at this stage to believe that the SDI really would make the United States invulnerable to nuclear attack, but the protection it may give to American missile sites and air bases, and the added strain that would be imposed on the Soviet defense budget by a need to produce many more rockets and warheads in order to swamp it, can hardly be welcome to the Kremlin. More worrying still, perhaps, are the implications for high-tech conventional warfare. Alex Glikson, writing in *The New York Times* last year, observed:

A defense that can protect against 99 percent of the Soviet nuclear arsenal may be judged as not good enough, given the destructive potential of the weapons that could survive. If the United States could achieve a technological superiority that would assure destruction of much of the Soviet Union's conventionally armed aircraft, tanks, and ships, the Soviet numerical advantage would be less threatening. Technology judged less than ideal for S.D.I. may be perfectly applicable for non-nuclear combat.

Such reasoning on the part of the Soviets would compel them to make a much larger investment in the advanced technologies of lasers, optics, supercomputers, guidance



systems, and navigation. As one Soviet spokesman put it recently, there will be "a whole new arms race at a much higher technological level." Judging from the 1984 warnings by Marshal Nikolai Ogarkov, then the chief of military staff, about the awful consequences if the USSR fails to match Western technology, the Red Army seems less than confident that it could win that sort of race.

In addition, there is a potential demographic threat to the USSR's traditional advantage in quantity—that is, in manpower. This is the result of two trends, noted above: the overall decline in the Soviet birthrate, and the rising share of births in the non-Russian regions. If these trends are leading to difficulties in the allocation of manpower between agriculture and industry, then they present even more of a problem for military recruitment. Taking 1.3 to 1.5 million recruits each year from the 2.1 million males available ought to be feasible, but an increasing proportion come from the Asiatic youth in the South, many of whom are not well versed in the Russian language and have a far lower level of mechanical and electronic competence, and some of whom are strongly influenced by Islam. Studies of the ethnic composition of the Soviet armed forces reveal that the officer corps and the NCOs are overwhelmingly Slavic—as are the rocket forces, the air force, the navy, and the technical forces. Unsurprisingly, so are the Category I (first-class) divisions of the Red Army. In contrast, the Category II and (especially) Category III divisions and most of the service and transport units are manned by non-Slavs, which raises an interesting question about the effectiveness of these "follow-on" divisions in a conventional war against NATO, should the Category I divisions require substantial reinforcement. This bias, labeled "racialistic" and (Great Russian) "nationalistic" by many Western commentators, is less important in strictly military terms than in the fact that a considerable portion of available Soviet manpower is regarded as unreliable and inefficient by the general staff—probably an accurate judgment, given the reports of Moslem fundamentalism throughout southern Russia and the consternation of those troops at having to invade Afghanistan.

Like the Austro-Hungarian Empire eighty years ago—or, for that matter, the czarist empire eighty years ago—the Soviet leadership faces a "nationality problem" undimmed by the ideology of Marxism. To be sure, the control apparatus now is altogether more formidable than that existing prior to 1914, and one ought perhaps to take with a pinch of salt the occasional claim that the Ukraine is a hotbed of disaffection. Nevertheless, long memories recall Ukrainians welcoming the German invaders in 1941 and the forceful (and successful) Georgian protests at the 1978 attempt to make Russian an equal first language in that republic. Today there are reports of discontent in the Baltic

provinces, millions of Kazakhs and Uighers along the Sino-Soviet border, and 48 million Moslems north of the unstable border with Turkey, Iran, and Afghanistan. All of this seems to prey upon the minds of the Soviet leaders and to add to their insecurities. In light of the recently reported disturbances in Kazakhstan, it is interesting to note that Gorbachev's January 27 speech called for "respect" for ethnic sensibilities but went on to warn that they should not be encouraged: "Let those who like to play on nationalist or chauvinistic prejudices entertain no illusions or expect no loosening up." This reminds one of Lenin's similarly ambivalent policy toward the non-Russian races within the USSR: respect, yes; freedom, no.

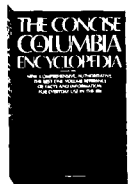
More specifically, this whole issue provokes an increasing concern about where to deploy the shrinking numbers of more "reliable" Slavic youth: Should they be directed into the armed forces, to the Category I divisions and other prestige services, even if fewer and fewer of them are available for industry and agriculture, both of which desperately need infusions of trained and loyal recruits? Or should they be directed into civilian jobs, even if this means a growing non-Slavic presence in the Red Army, and thus risks to military efficiency? Since the Soviet tradition is one of "safety first," probably the former tendency will prevail; but far from solving the dilemma, it will merely reflect a choice in favor of the lesser of two evils.

The Nuclear Stalemate

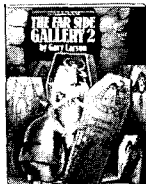
IF THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC COMPONENTS OF WHAT SOVIET strategists term "the correlation of forces" (and the Pentagon would call "the net assessment of the balance of power") are a cause for concern in the Politburo, so are the technological components. However imposing the Soviet military machine appears to an outside observer, it is nonetheless worthwhile to measure that machine against the array of strategic tasks that the Soviet military may be called upon to carry out. In undertaking such an exercise, it is useful to separate conventional and nuclear warfare. For obvious reasons, the items in the military balances that have attracted the most attention and concern are the strategic nuclear weapons. The 1986 count of the superpowers' strategic nuclear warheads, according to the International Institute of Strategic Studies, is as follows:

Estimated Strategic Nuclear Warheads

	USA	USSR
ICBM-borne warheads	2,110	6,420
SLBM-borne warheads	6,656	3,216
Aircraft-borne warheads	4,080	1,080
Total	12,846	10,716

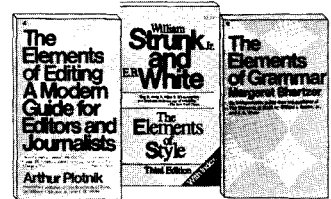


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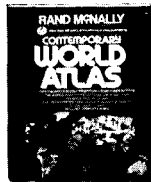


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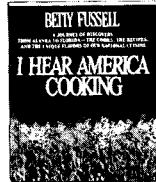
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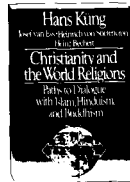
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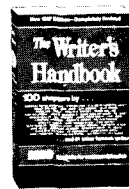
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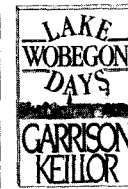
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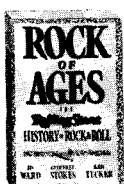
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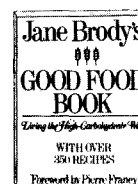
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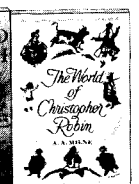
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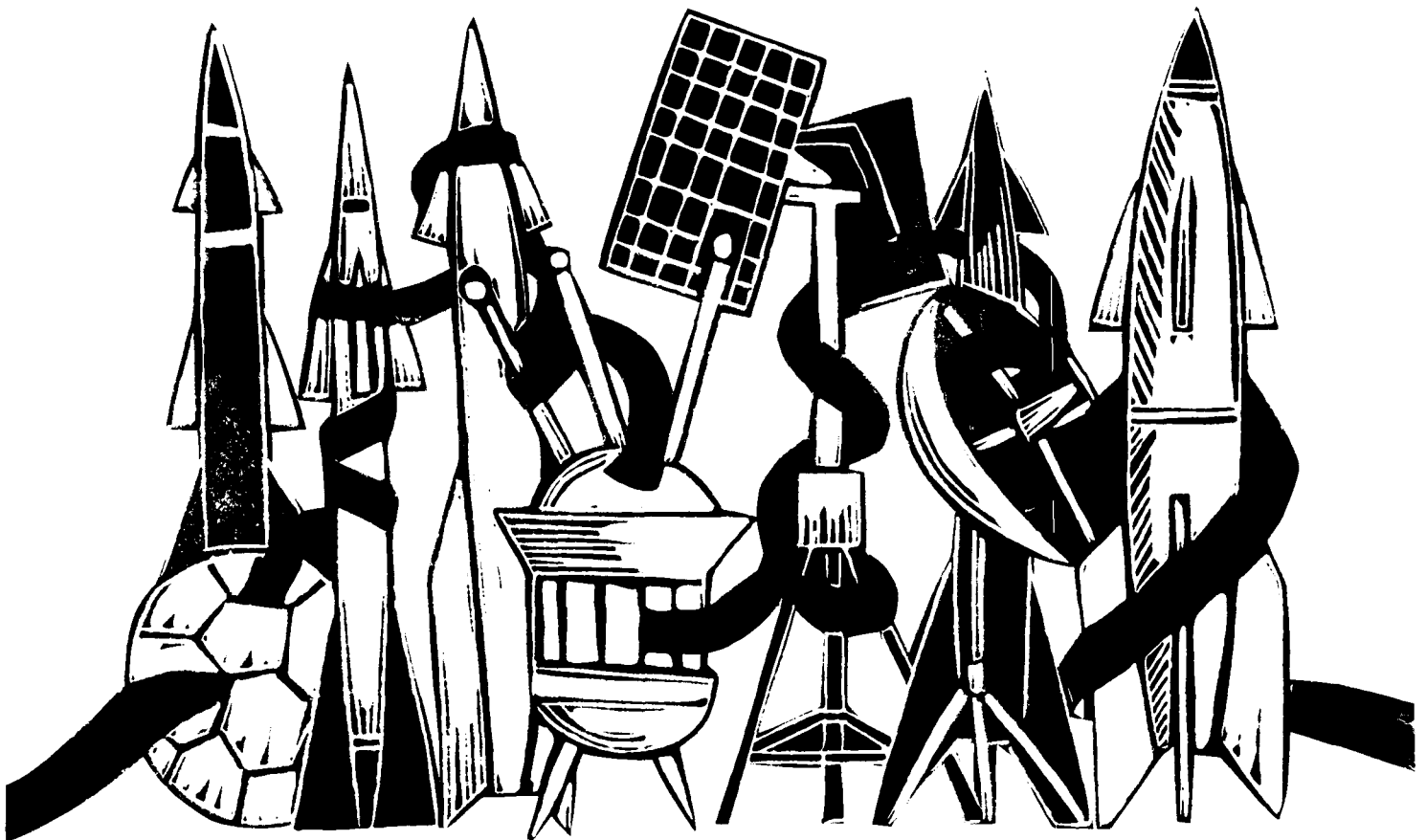
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For all the debate about windows of opportunity and the possibilities of one side or the other having a first-strike capability, it is clear from these figures that neither Washington nor Moscow possesses any guarantee that it could obliterate its rival without also suffering devastation; the coming of a Star Wars technology would not significantly alter that fact. In particular, the possession by each side of a great number of submarine-launched ballistic missiles, which are difficult to detect, makes it inconceivable for either side to assume that it could knock out the enemy's nuclear-weapons capacity all at once. This fact, as well as the widely publicized possibility of a "nuclear winter," will stay the hand of decision-makers, unless they are dragged down by some accidentally induced escalation. It therefore follows that each side is locked into a nuclear stalemate from which it cannot retreat—it being practically impossible to disinvent nuclear technology, or for one or both superpowers to give up possession of the weapons—and from which it cannot gain real advantage, since each power's new system is countered or imitated by the other, and since it is too risky actually to use the weapons themselves.

Also of great concern to Moscow are the fast-expanding nuclear armories of China, Britain, and France. Until a few years ago it was commonly assumed that those three nations were merely marginal factors in the nuclear balance, and that their nuclear capability was not at all "credible," since they could inflict only limited damage upon the USSR in exchange for their own nuclear obliteration. But

that assumption may soon require modification. Most alarming to Moscow is China's increasing nuclear capacity, about which the USSR has been concerned for the past twenty-five years. If China can develop not only a more sophisticated land-based ICBM system but also—as seems its intention—a long-range, submarine-based ballistic-missile system, and if Sino-Soviet disputes are not settled to mutual satisfaction, then the USSR faces the possibility of a future armed clash along Chinese borders which might escalate into a nuclear exchange. As things are at present, the devastation to China would be immense; but Moscow cannot exclude the possibility that at least a certain number (a number that will grow larger as time passes) of Chinese nuclear missiles would hit the Soviet Union.

More worrying technically, although perhaps less so politically, is the buildup of British and French nuclear-delivery and warhead capacities. Until recently, the deterrent effect of both of these powers' strategic weapons systems appeared dubious, and it was difficult to see either Britain or France risking national suicide when it could inflict only partial damage on the USSR, given its own modest delivery systems. In the next few years, however, the devastation that each of those midsize powers could wreak on the USSR will be multiplied many times, owing to the vast enhancement of its submarine-launched ballistic-missile systems. For example, Britain's purchase of Trident II submarines would give it a nearly invulnerable deterrent force that could destroy more than 350 Soviet targets, rather than about 16 targets, as at present. France's new subma-



rine *l'Inflexible*, with the longer-range, multi-warhead M-4 missile, is probably capable of attacking 96 Soviet targets—more than all of France's five earlier nuclear submarines together could attack—and when the other boats have been re-equipped with the M-4 missiles, France's strategic warheads will have increased fivefold, allowing it also to be theoretically capable of hitting hundreds of Soviet targets from thousands of miles away.

What this could mean in real terms is, of course, impossible to forecast. But it seems fair to assume that Soviet military planners, who take nuclear-war-fighting possibilities very seriously indeed, find these recent developments disturbing. Not only will they face *four* countries with the potential to inflict heavy (perhaps extraordinarily heavy) damage upon the Soviet heartland, but they must consider what the subsequent world military balance would look like if the USSR were involved in a nuclear exchange with any one of these powers while the others were neutral observers.

The Specter of a Two-Front War

IF, HOWEVER, THIS LEAVES CONVENTIONAL WEAPONS AS the chief measure of Soviet military power—and the chief tool for securing the political aims of the Soviet state—it is difficult to believe that Soviet planners can feel much more reassured by the present international strategic balance.

The first and most obvious point to be made is that any analysis of the conventional balance of forces needs to measure the rival alliances as a whole, or at least in the whole European context. As soon as that is done, it becomes evident that the non-American parts of NATO are much more significant than the non-Soviet parts of the Warsaw Pact. Indeed, as an abstract of the 1985 British Defence White Paper took pains to point out, "European countries were providing the major part of the ready [NATO] forces stationed in Europe: 90 percent of the manpower, 85 percent of the tanks, 95 percent of the artillery and 80 percent of the combat aircraft; and over 70 percent of the major warships in Atlantic and European waters. . . . The full mobilized strength of European forces was nearly 7 million men as against 3.5 million for the United States." It is, of course, also true that 250,000 of the American men are deployed in Germany, that the Army divisions and air squadrons that the United States plans to pour across the Atlantic in the event of a European war would be critical reinforcements, and that NATO as a whole depends upon the American nuclear deterrent and upon American sea power. The point is that the North Atlantic alliance is much more evenly balanced between the two pillars of the arch than is the Warsaw Pact, which leans

precipitously toward Moscow. It is also worth noting that America's NATO allies spend several times more on defense than the USSR's Warsaw Pact allies; indeed, Britain, France, and West Germany *each* spend more on weapons than the non-Soviet Warsaw Pact countries together.

If, then, the strength of each of the two alliances is measured as a whole, and without the curious omissions and provisos that have characterized some of the more alarmist Western assessments (it is, for example, all too easy to show the Warsaw Pact as enormously superior by including, say, all of the USSR's armed forces, even those deployed on the Chinese front, and by excluding, say, France's), a picture emerges of strategic parity in most respects. Even where the Warsaw Pact has the edge in numbers, that edge does not look decisive. For example, both alliances appear to have roughly equal ground forces in Europe, as well as similar totals of all ground forces and ground-force reserves. In the roundest comparison of all, the Warsaw Pact's 14.4 million men (6.3 million in the main forces and 8.1 million in the reserves) is not vastly greater than NATO's 11.3 million men (5.0 million in the main forces and 6.3 million in the reserves), especially since a large proportion of the Warsaw Pact total consists of Category III units and reserve forces of the Red Army. Even on the critically important Central Front, where NATO forces are most seriously outnumbered by the masses of Soviet tanks and motorized-rifle divisions, the Warsaw Pact's advantage is not a very comforting one—especially when it is recalled how difficult it is to conduct fast, offensive, "maneuver warfare" in the crowded terrain of north Germany and when it is realized how many of the USSR's 52,000 so-called main battle tanks are the obsolescent T-54s, which would simply clog up the roads. Provided that NATO has sufficient reserves of ammunition, fuel, replacement weaponry, and so forth, it certainly looks in a much better position to repulse a Soviet conventional offensive than it was in the 1950s.

In addition there is the incalculable element of the integrity and cohesion of the respective military alliances. That NATO has many weaknesses is undeniable, whether one considers the frequent trans-Atlantic disputes over "sharing" the burden or the tricky issue of intergovernmental consultation in the event of pressure to launch nuclear missiles. Neutralist and anti-NATO sentiment, detectable in left-of-center parties from West Germany and Britain to Spain and Greece, is also, periodically, a cause for concern. And a future "Finlandization" of any of the states lying along the Warsaw Pact's western boundary (especially, of course, West Germany) would be an enormous strategic gain to the USSR as well as a source of economic relief. Yet even if such a scenario is possible in theory, it can hardly compare to the worries that Moscow must at

present entertain about the reliability of its "empire" in Eastern Europe. The broad-based popularity of the Solidarity movement in Poland, the evident East German wishes to improve relations with Bonn, the "creeping capitalism" of the Hungarians, the economic woes that are afflicting not merely Poland and Romania but all of Eastern Europe, pose extraordinarily difficult problems for the Soviet leadership. They are not issues that can be readily solved by the use of the Red Army; nor does it appear that fresh doses of "scientific socialism" would provide an answer satisfactory to the Eastern Europeans. The Kremlin's rhetoric about the modernization and re-examination of Soviet economic and social policies does not imply that much change is planned for the many controls over Eastern Europe.

Yet these varied signs of political discontent and economic distress must call ever more into question the reliability of the non-Soviet armies in the Warsaw Pact. The Polish armed forces, for example, can hardly be reckoned to add to the pact's strength; if anything, they detract from it, since they—and the critically important Polish roads and rail lines—would need close Red Army supervision in wartime. Similarly, it is difficult to imagine the Czech and Hungarian armies enthusiastically rushing forward upon Moscow's orders to assault NATO positions. Even the attitude of the East German forces, probably the most effective and modernized armed forces among those of the USSR's allies, might be affected by the order to attack westward. It is true that the great bulk (four fifths) of the Warsaw Pact's forces are Soviet, and that Soviet divisions would be the real spearhead in any conventional war with the West; but it would be a considerable task for Red Army commanders to conduct such a war *and* keep an eye on the million or more Eastern European soldiers. The possibility (however remote) that the NATO alliance might seek to respond to a Warsaw Pact offensive by mounting a counteroffensive—into, say, Czechoslovakia—can only increase an unease that is probably as much political as it is military.

Since the early 1960s, moreover, Soviet planners have had to contend with an even more daunting problem: the possibility that the USSR might be involved in a large-scale conflict with NATO *and* China. If it were, the prospects for switching reinforcements from one front to another would be severely limited. And even if a war were being fought on only one front, the Kremlin might well fear to re-deploy divisions from another region that had the armed forces of a potential foe arrayed across the border. As it is, the USSR is compelled to keep about fifty divisions and 13,000 tanks ready for the eventuality of a Sino-Soviet clash; and although the Soviet forces are more modern and mobile than the Chinese, it is hard to envisage

their total victory against an army four times as large—not to mention a prolonged occupation of China proper. All this assumes that the war would remain a conventional one (which, given some Soviet hints about how they would crush China, may be a flawed assumption); but if there *were* a Sino-Soviet nuclear exchange, Soviet planners have to wonder, would their country not be left in a position of inferiority vis-à-vis the still neutral yet critical West? Similarly, a Soviet Union badly hurt by either nuclear or large-scale conventional fighting against NATO would have to worry about how to handle Chinese pressures.

Although China is, apart from NATO, the most serious concern for Soviet planners, simply because of its size and proximity, it is not difficult to imagine their worries about the entire Asian flank. In the largest geopolitical sense it may well be that the age-old tendency of Muscovite-Russian policy—steady territorial expansion across Asia—has come to a halt. The re-emergence of China, the independence and growing strength of India, the economic recovery of Japan, the assertiveness of many smaller Asian states, have surely put to rest the nineteenth-century Western fear of Russia's gradually taking control of the entire continent. (The very idea nowadays would make the Soviet general staff blench with alarm.) To be sure, Moscow has not been prevented from making marginal gains, as in Afghanistan; but the duration of that conflict, and the hostility it has provoked elsewhere in the region, merely confirm that any further extensions of Soviet territory would be made at incalculable military and political cost. In contrast to Russia's self-confident announcement of its "Asian mission" a century ago, the rulers in the Kremlin now have to worry about Moslem fundamentalism seeping across their southern borders from the Middle East, about the Chinese threat, and about complications in Afghanistan, Korea, and Vietnam. However many divisions are positioned in Asia, they can probably never seem enough to give security along such a vast periphery, especially since the Trans-Siberian Railway is still terribly vulnerable to disruption by an enemy rocket strike, and since the railway's destruction would have dire implications for the Soviet forces in the Far East.

Gorbachev's Problem—and Ours

TO ANY REASONABLE OUTSIDE OBSERVER, THE USSR already has more than enough military strength to guarantee its security, and Moscow's insistence upon building ever newer weapons systems simply induces insecurity in everyone else. To the decision-makers in the Kremlin, heirs to a militaristic and often paranoid tradition of statecraft, their country's frontiers appear to be crumbling on all sides—in Eastern Europe, along the

"northern tier" of the Middle East, and on the lengthy border with China—and pushing out so many Soviet divisions and air squadrons to stabilize those frontiers has not produced the hoped-for invulnerability. Pulling back from Eastern Europe or making border concessions to China is also feared, however, not only because of the local consequences but because it might be seen as an indication of a loss of willpower. At the same time that the Kremlin wrestles with these traditional problems concerning the security of the country's extensive borders, it must try to keep up with the United States in rocketry, satellite-based weapons, space exploration, and so on. Thus the USSR—or, better, the Marxist system of the USSR—is being tested both quantitatively and qualitatively in the world-power stakes, and it does not like the odds.

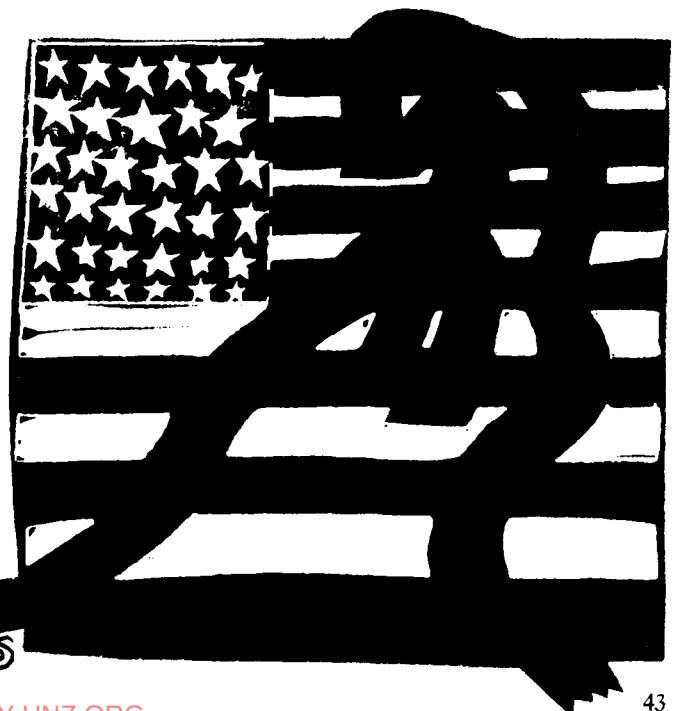
Those odds (or that "correlation of forces") would obviously be better if the economy were healthier, which brings us back to the Soviet Union's long-term problem. Economics matters to the leaders of the Soviet military, not only because they are Marxist and not only because it pays for their weapons and pays their wages but also because they understand its importance to the outcome of a lengthy coalition war. It *might* be true, the *Soviet Military Encyclopaedia* conceded in 1979, that a global coalition war would be short, especially if nuclear weapons were used. "However," it added, "taking into account the great military and economic potentials of possible coalitions of belligerent states, it is not excluded that it might be protracted also." If such a war were "protracted," the emphasis would again be on economic staying power, as it has been in the great coalition wars of the past. With that assumption in mind, it cannot be comforting to the Soviet leadership to reflect that the USSR is responsible for only 12 or 13 percent of the world's GNP (or about 17 percent, if one dares to include the Warsaw Pact satellites as plus factors), and that it not only is far behind the United States and Western Europe in total GNP but also is being overtaken by Japan and may—if current growth rates continue over the long term—even find itself being approached by China in the next thirty years. As *The Economist* coldly observed, in 1913 "Imperial Russia had a real product per manhour 3½ times greater than Japan's [but the USSR] has spent its nigh 70 socialist years slipping relatively backwards, to maybe a quarter of Japan's rate now." However one assesses the military strength of the USSR at the moment, therefore, the prospect of its being only the fourth or fifth among the great productive centers of the world by the early twenty-first century cannot but worry the Soviet leadership, simply because of the implications for long-term Soviet power.

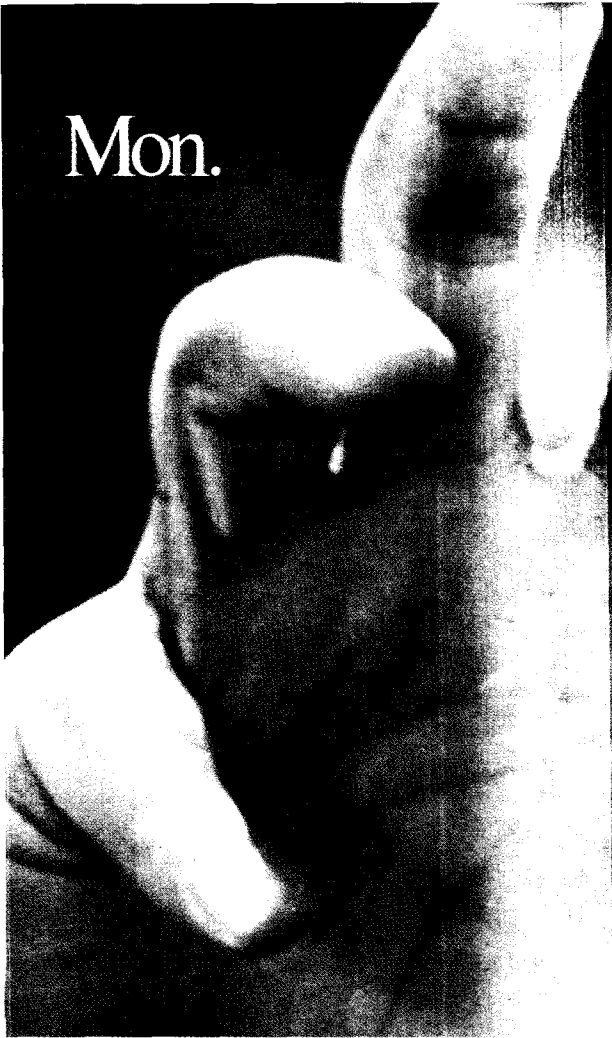
This does not mean that the USSR is close to collapse. It does mean that it is facing awkward choices. One Soviet

expert, Professor Seweryn Bialer, of Columbia University, has said, "The policy of guns, butter, and growth—the political cornerstone of the Brezhnev era—is no longer possible," and "Even according to the more optimistic scenarios . . . the Soviet Union will face an economic crunch far more severe than anything it encountered in the 1960s and 1970s." It is therefore to be expected that Gorbachev's efforts and exhortations to improve the Soviet economy will intensify. But it is highly unlikely that even an energetic regime in Moscow would either abandon "scientific socialism" in order to boost the economy or drastically cut the burden of defense expenditures and thereby affect the military core of the Soviet state.

It is a grim dilemma, made no less grim by the fact that whatever Gorbachev's freshness of style, he shows no intention of either abandoning control from the top or disregarding Russia's preference for military security over anything else. Obviously, his shake-up of the system could make the pace of the Soviet Union's relative decline much slower than it was during the Brezhnev years; but the evidence suggests that its decline will continue nonetheless.

There is nothing in the character or tradition of the Russian state to suggest that it could ever accept imperial decline gracefully. Indeed, none of the overextended multinational empires of the past—not the Roman Empire, the Ottoman, the Spanish, the Napoleonic, or the British—ever retreated to its own ethnic base until it had been defeated in a great-power war or (as with Britain after 1945) was so weakened by war that an imperial withdrawal was politically unavoidable. Those who would rejoice at the present-day difficulties of the Soviet Union, and who look forward to the collapse of that empire, might wish to recall that such transformations normally occur at very great cost, and not always in a predictable fashion. Gorbachev's problem, in other words, is also ours. □

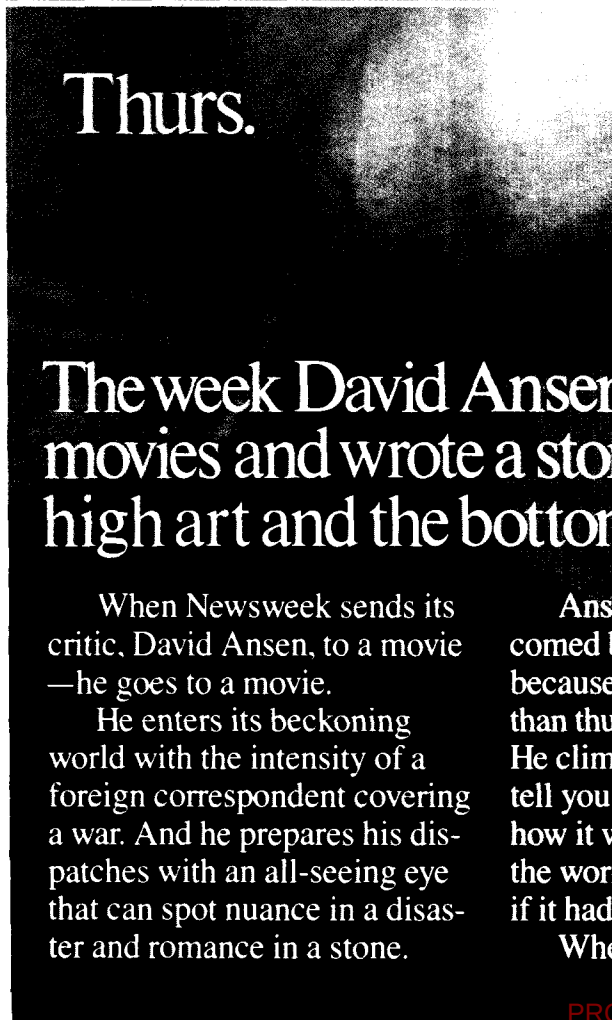




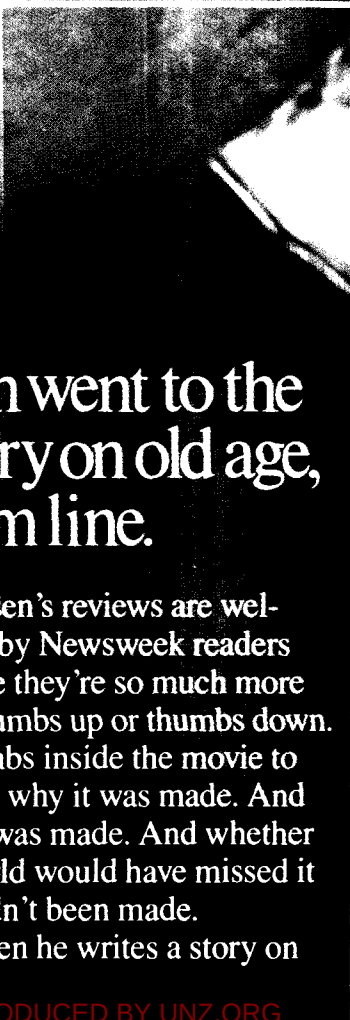
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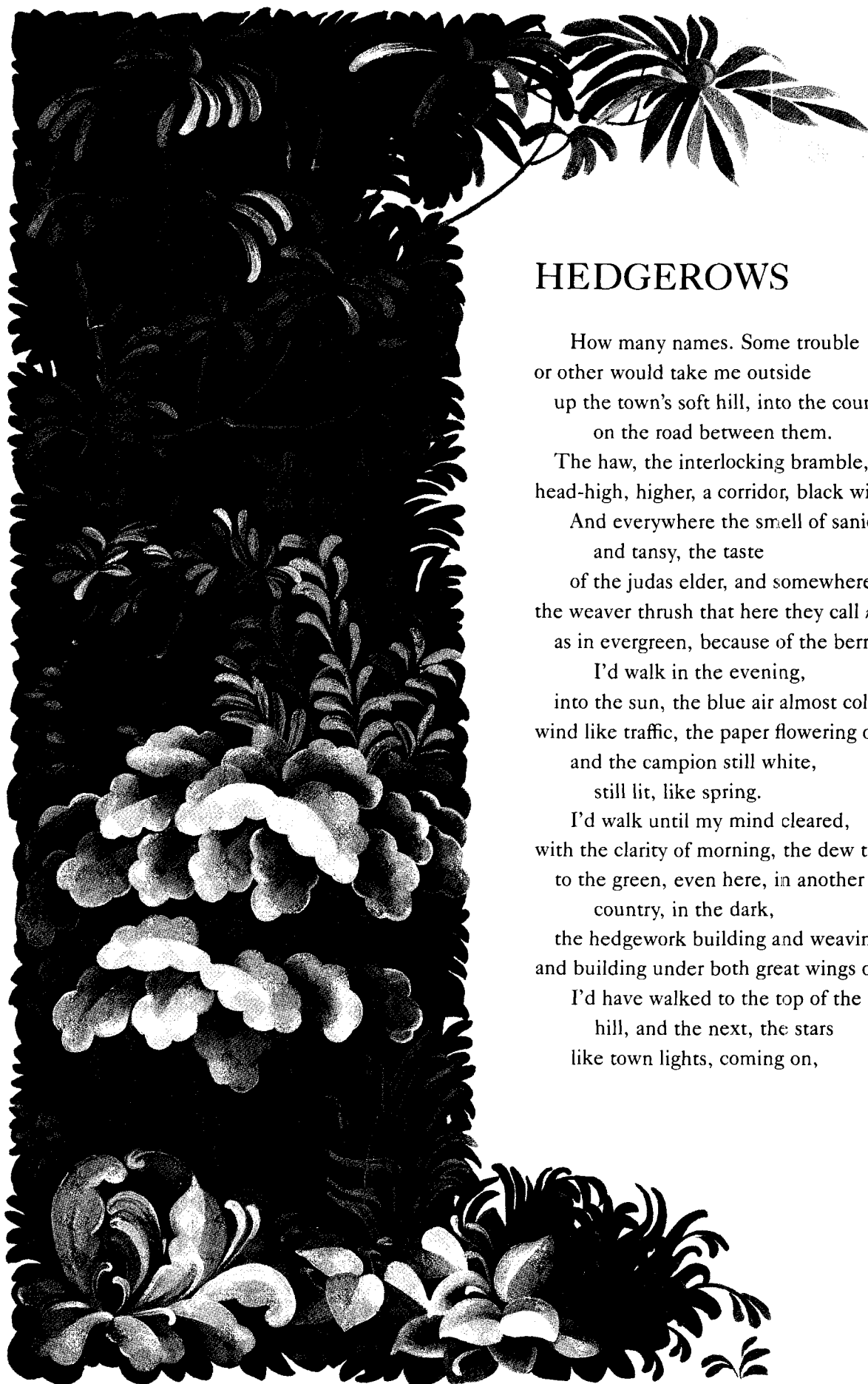
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HEDGEROWS

How many names. Some trouble
or other would take me outside
up the town's soft hill, into the country,
on the road between them.

The haw, the interlocking bramble, the thorn,
head-high, higher, a corridor, black windows.

And everywhere the smell of sanicle
and tansy, the taste
of the judas elder, and somewhere
the weaver thrush that here they call *mistle*,
as in evergreen, because of the berries.

I'd walk in the evening,
into the sun, the blue air almost cold,
wind like traffic, the paper flowering of the ox-eye
and the campion still white,
still lit, like spring.

I'd walk until my mind cleared,
with the clarity of morning, the dew transparent
to the green, even here, in another
country, in the dark,
the hedgework building and weaving
and building under both great wings of the night.

I'd have walked to the top of the next
hill, and the next, the stars
like town lights, coming on,

the next town whether Ash Mill or Rose Ash.

Then sometimes a car, sometimes a bird, a magpie,
gliding. This is voicelessness,
the still breath easing.

I think, for a moment, I wanted to die,
and that somehow the tangle
and bramble, the branch and flowering of the hedge
would take me in, torn, rendered down
to the apple or the red wound or the balm,
the green man, leaf and shred.

I think I wanted the richness, the thickness,
the whole dumb life gone to seed,
and the work to follow, the hedger with his tools,
ethering and cutting, wood and mind.

And later, in this life,
to come back as a pail made of elm
or broom straw of broom or the heartwood of the yew
for the bow, oak for the plow—
the bowl on the wild cherry of the table for the boy
who sits there, having come from the field
with his family, half hungry, half cold,
one more day of the harvest accounted,
yellowing, winnowing,
the boy lost in the thought
of the turning of the year and the dead father.

—Stanley Plumly



A Short Story



MY FATHER'S SON

BY ERNST HAVEMANN

RECEPTION SAID THAT WARD NINE WOULD NOT MIND if I came after official visiting hours. "When you don't have much time left, you want to make use of it, don't you?"

The ward sister was accusing: "Took your time about coming to see your father, didn't you? You're lucky he isn't gone already. He came three hundred miles to get admitted here, so as to be near you when he . . ."

"He's not my father," I said.

"Well, he says he's expecting his son." She pulled a file out of a cupboard and ran her finger down the page, obviously expecting to prove something. "Patient Wilhelm Ludovicus Klinet," she read. "Next of kin, Wilhelm Ludovicus

Klinet II. That's you, isn't it? Relationship . . . the line is blank. But that's what he told me. He's in great pain but he refused medication so that he'd be alert when you came. If you came."

"Where is he?"

"You walked past him. Bed Eight."

It was an old-fashioned, high-ceilinged room in a Cape-town hospital, with two rows of beds extending from each side of the central, glass-enclosed cubicle, where the nurses sat. Bed Eight was near the door. Uncle Will looked as I remembered, except that he was very thin and his skin was blotched instead of being leather-tanned. His eyes were closed, so I said nothing, but put the chair where he

JUNE 1987

ILLUSTRATION BY MICHEL GUIRÉ VAKA

would see me when he woke, and got on with my thriller.

I looked up after some minutes to find him regarding me.

"You still here," he said. "What did you want?"

"I called to say hello, Uncle Will."

"So now you've decided to talk. Well, you've said hello."

He closed his eyes. After a moment or two he opened them again. "You still here? I can make you go away, you know, just like I made you come."

"I'll go whenever you want, Uncle Will."

"If you can talk, I expect you're real," he said. "Shake my hand, Billy." I shook his hand. "Nice to see you, Billy boy."

A nurse wheeled up a tray of pills, jars, and equipment. She was plump and smiled warmly, sympathetically. I'm always amazed that so many nurses really seem to care. She took a chart from the foot of his bed and prepared to ask something. Before she could speak, Uncle Will said, "Yes, once. Large, firm, and well-formed. All the best things are. You've got a nice pair, Florrie Nightingale."

She blushed, as if years of nursing had failed to inure her to such remarks. "He's been waiting for you," she said. "He's a cheeky old man."

When I came the following day, he was sitting up and cheerful. "I let them jab me a couple of times," he said. "I don't think it will be habit-forming, do you?"

He put out his hand. I took it and held it. "I'm glad you're talking, Billy boy. I could make you come and go, but I couldn't make you talk. I need to talk. Tell me about yourself. I heard you were a daring sort of fellow. Card-carrying Communist, weren't you?"

"No, Uncle Will. Perhaps you heard that I was advising a couple of trade unions."

"Same thing. Bully for you. What else?"

"I think you know I'm an accountant. I have a good job. I'm not married. I have a girlfriend, but she isn't playing with me at the moment. My house is down near the beach. You'll come and stay when you're better. You'll like it."

"Nice of you to invite me, Billy boy." He closed his eyes for a long time and then opened them again. "Good man. You didn't take advantage of my weakness and go away. It takes intense concentration to make you materialize if you're not actually here. Well, now I don't have to use my energy that way. What I wanted to ask was, Did you like Arnold?"

"About as much as most boys like their fathers. I think I'm fonder of his memory than I was of him."

"He was a frightened, righteous fool. Even when we were boys. He became a True Follower because he felt so guilty about masturbating. Do you know about the True Followers?"

"Of course, Uncle Will. That's how I was brought up."

"True Followers of Christ Jesus, they called themselves. Not Jesus Christ, Christ Jesus. We called them Dimensional Lumber, like six-by-threes and two-by-fours, because they went around in pairs, two by two, holding pray-

er meetings. I can still hear Arnold, with his pathetic lisp, singing out of tune, 'Jethuth is pathing by, pathing by, grathp your opportunity.' He gave them all his money, you know. That's why you grew up so poor."

His face suddenly contorted. "Bugger off now," he whispered. I rapped at the glass cubicle and a nurse hurried out, ready with a hypodermic.

I was out of town for three days. The next time I came, he was not in Bed Eight. I found him next to the nurses' cubicle. "You skipped a day," he said, not accusingly. "I count days. Not like some of these old buggers, who can't tell Tuesday from a dose of clap. Know why they moved me?"

"No. Is it a promotion?"

"They put the critical patients close to the nurses. They thought I was dying, but I fooled them. I'm not getting any worse, you know."

"You look fine to me. You're quite your old self, Uncle Will."

"You can tell how sick they think you are by where they put you. This bed's for special care. See that bed at the far door? With curtains round it?"

I looked.

"Know what it's for?"

"I suppose they're washing someone, or helping him to have a crap."

"Wrong. Think. It's by the door into the bowels of the place, and it's always curtained."

"I give up."

He smiled triumphantly. "They can wheel that bed out without other patients' noticing. It's the deathbed, Billy boy. If you ever come and I'm not here, look in that bed." He raised his voice so that the occupants of neighboring beds would hear him. "They put you in that bed a day or two before they expect you to die. They like you to croak in the early hours, when other patients are fast asleep. If you don't die soon enough, they put a pillow on your face."

The old man in the next bed mumbled a protest.

"He's scared, poor bastard," Uncle Will said. "Nothing to live for, but scared to die. Did they phone you about me?"

"No, I came because I wanted to see you."

"One of these days they'll phone and say, 'He's sinking.' Like the *Titanic*. Then you can tell them to give me Bovril. Remember those adverts with an Englishy Englishman floating in a big brown bottle, saying, 'Prevents that sinking feeling'? Did you ever touch a dead man?"

"I don't think so."

"I touched Pa. They should have let me come in when he was dying, but they didn't. The others gathered round his bed without me. Then Arnold came out to the stables where I was and said, all pale and sanctimonious, 'He's passed away.' Not 'died.' 'Passed away.' I went into Pa's room. I hadn't been in there for fifteen years, but I remembered all of it—the pictures and the writing desk—and there was Pa, pale and stern, with his hands on his chest. I took one hand and said, 'Good morning, Pa.' I hoped he

would say, 'Good morning, Willie Wilhelm,' like before we quarreled, but of course he just lay there, silent. His hand was cool, but not cold. I shook his shoulder a little and said clearly, 'Pa, it's me. It's your Willie Wilhelm,' but he stayed stern and unmoving. I cried a little and kissed his forehead and put his hand back on his chest, but underneath the other one, not on top, so that there would be something I had done for him. What do you make of that?"

"It's sad. Too bad you quarreled with Grandpa. What was it about?"

"It was for nought."

"For nothing!"

"I said for nought. A zero. Never mind about that now. I know you won't care, but all the same, when I'm dead I'd like you to take my hand and talk a few words to me. If you don't mind touching a corpse."

"Sure, Uncle Will. I'll do that. But there'll be plenty of time between now and then."

"I'll appreciate it, Billy. Like perhaps Pa would have if he'd known. Perhaps at the end he had forgiven me and would have liked to say so. Don't you think he might have? He didn't speak for a week before he died. What do you suppose he was thinking as he lay there, awake but speechless? He might have been thinking he was wrong, and unable to say it."

"Sure," I said. "Very likely."

"You think so too," he said, eagerly. "Makes sense—I had been his favorite. Stands to reason at the end he would want me by him, not Arnold. I looked just like him. I had his birthmark. You can't argue with that."

"No," I said. "How did you happen to be at Grandpa's place?"

"I'd been there for a couple of years. I was running the farm. Arnold was supposed to, but he was looking after Pa, pretty well full time. Pa was old and frail. He sat all day on the verandah and gazed. His big interest was birds. He had a bird table on each side of his chair—one for seed-eaters, with grain and bread crumbs, and another with tallow and ants' eggs and dried mince, for the insect eaters. He had bird droppings all over his beard and clothes. His special love was a turtle dove that he called Noah. It used to take corn from between Pa's lips. I started putting out grain by the stable, and quite soon Noah was feeding at my place, too. I caught him and put a little roll of paper on his leg with a paper clip and let him go, thinking Pa would see the paper and read my message, but he didn't even notice."

"What did your piece of paper say?"

"What does it matter? Pa didn't read it. It said, 'Hello, Pa, Love, Wilhelm.' Well, then I waited for Noah, and when he settled in the orchard I shot him."

"Oh, no!"

"Oh, yes, Billy, my boy. I shot him with a B.S.A. Number One air gun. But I only wounded him—I was never a very good shot. Then damn me if this bloody Noah doesn't fly to Pa's lap and expire. Ma and Arnold had led Pa to believe I was overseas, but when he dug the air-gun pellet

out of this bird, he cursed me and had one of his attacks. On account of a bloody turtle dove. Can you believe it?"

The nice nurse came by. He reached out to try to stroke her leg. She gently put his hand back on the coverlet. "Please speak severely to him. Do you know what he did! He poured orange juice into his urine specimen. The lab almost had kittens. You naughty old man."

"It's all for you, Florrie Nightingale, dear. Did any man ever pass orange juice for you before? Nice woman. Did you quarrel with Arnold?"

"No, Uncle Will. Dad wasn't the quarreling kind."

"No. Namby-pamby character. When we were school-boys, he kept trying to do something that would make Pa praise him. He was always hoping Pa would ask him to help fill cartridges or rack wine or adjust a machine. But Pa nearly always called me. I was his favorite, see. Sometimes Pa did call Arnold, but he was so clumsy he nearly always bugged it. Then Pa would call me after all. Poor bloody Arnold. I used to beat him at school, too, even though I was a year younger. If Arnold heard Pa strike a match or blow his nose in the next room, he would produce a funny little cough. I could make him cough by imitating a sound Pa might make, like scraping a chair leg on the floor."

"Poor Dad," I said. "Perhaps that was why he tried to grow a moustache like Grandpa's. If Grandpa was so fond of you, how come you quarreled with him?"

"Did Arnold punish you?"

"I suppose he did, but I only remember one time that was severe."

"Beat you, did he? The bully."

"No, Uncle Will. He kept me in my room all day without food. Except apples—Worcester Pearmain, they were. It was because I changed my school report. I got a B for Scripture instead of an A, and I knew it would distress him, so I changed it. But I'm sure the whole thing hurt him more than it did me."

"You forged a paper! Oh, my dearest boy! It was heredity—you can't argue against that. I wouldn't have punished you. Like Pa shouldn't have punished me for adding a little figure to a check. He punished me for nought, for a zero, see."

ONE EVENING I ARRIVED TO FIND HIM PORING OVER A photograph.

"Your mother was a lovely girl," he said.

"I mostly remember her looking sad."

"She was sad because she had married Arnold. He met her at a True Followers meeting. She sang out of tune too, but she was a lovely girl. Clear gray eyes, and her nose wrinkled a little when she laughed. She had a skew tooth, like a little girl. Whenever they were going out, they would invite me. Arnold knew how boring he was. Instead of going on picnics and courting like other couples, they used to work together in his fields. She wore a big blue sun hat and a skirt that sometimes showed her knees. She pretended to be Arnold's girl, because of the True Followers,

but she really preferred me. Even so, she kept her distance, till the last night before I went to the Congo. Then she gave herself to me. So I was there before Arnold, wasn't I? And I left my mark. That's you, Billy boy."

"Really, Uncle Will? Do you really mean that?"

"Hell, Billy boy, don't let us beat about the bush. We haven't got all that much time, you know. Did you know she had to get married, and Arnold volunteered? No, of course not—it's not the sort of thing people tell a kid. Perhaps if you'd been with Arnold when he was dying, he'd have told you. But you weren't, were you?"

"I was away in Europe."

"You weren't with him, but you're with me. That tells you something, eh? But as regards your mother, I've never forgiven myself. I didn't know she was pregnant, you see. I buzzed off to the Congo, thinking I'd get rich and come back and marry her. By the time I came back she had married Arnold, and so you belonged to Arnold. It wasn't fair, him having Pa and Madeleen, and you. Especially as you were really mine."

"Are you saying she was pregnant by you, Uncle Will?"

"Work it out for yourself, my dear boy. She insisted you

be called Wilhelm Ludovicus, like me. And you've got the red birthmark on your neck, like Pa and me. And who was she friendly with before I left for the Congo? She never forgave me. Would hardly talk to me when I came back. Couldn't trust herself, see."

I said nothing. Mother had regarded Uncle Will as a layabout who sponged on my father.

"Well, so how do you like your new father?"

"It's a bit of a shock, Uncle Will. You know I'm very fond of you. It doesn't matter what the blood relationship is."

His lip trembled a bit. "I thought you'd be excited, and hug me, or something. But I suppose you hanker after Arnold."

I put my arm around him and kissed his brow. He put his hand on my head. "It's no great event, I suppose, to find you have a new father. Well, off you go, my boy. You'll be wanting to get drunk and cut your throat, I daresay."

My father, Arnold, had been an unsuccessful farmer, but not for want of system. When I had cleared out the farmhouse, I had found scores of weather records (he had a rain gauge and a max-min thermometer in each field), maps of soil analyses, records of sowings, irrigation, weeding, harvesting. I had also found twenty-six diaries, covering each of the twenty-six years he had spent on the farm. I burned the other papers but kept the diaries, because, as I rifled through one, I found an entry for my birth: 90°. *Ploughed red field. Madeleen delivered of a boy. Thanks be to Christ Jesus.*

I went home and dug out the diaries. I found that page and worked back from there. In the previous year's journal, eleven months before I was born, Father had recorded *Sunny 70°. Married to Madeleen at farm. 127 guests. Put Daisy to Schleswig bull.* A year before that—nearly two years before my birth—an entry read *65° Raining. Will left for Congo. May God be with him, my dear bro. Mowed.* There was occasional mention of sending Will money, and then, when I was four: *Will back, gave thanks to Christ Jesus. 23 at meeting. Weeded corn.*

I hadn't visited my parents' grave for years—not since I'd had the headstone put in. Now I felt I ought to. Next day I went to lunch early and then drove on to the cemetery. Florrie Nightingale was waiting at the hospital bus stop and accepted a ride. When I told her where I was going, she asked if she could come too. She didn't come with me to the actual grave but wandered around the cemetery, set right little vases that had fallen over, and squatted by a small, intensively gardened grave, pulling out weeds.

I knelt by Dad and Mum's headstone, because Dad had been keen on reverential kneeling, and this was rather like a True Followers meeting. "Two or three are gathered," he liked to say when he held a meeting at which he and my mother and I were the only people present. "Get on with it—we can count too," my mother used to snap.

"Hello, Dad," I said. I did not say, "It's Billy," because I supposed if Dad were there, he ought to recognize me. He had been cremated, which wasn't contrary to True Followers doctrine, but I had a guilt about it, because I gave con-

THESE ARE FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION

Here is the forest with very black trees
where the Princess wanders with only a stone
and a silver mirror from the enchanter.
Here is a box, a gift, that rustles one night
when street lamps flicker like candles rung
around the big cement cake of our city,
the river wrapped around it, a lustrous ribbon.
Here is a mystery play with fast trains
and French doors that lead into a garden,
and locked drawers, shots and a rap at the other door
and the sense that one knows and one will be
a victim, and the thin hope that someone
will untangle the riddle before the train
reaches the station where the small string-tied package
will fall into the wrong hands forever.
Here is a holy landscape, the village enclosed
by walls with helter-skelter angles so both
sides of the tiny houses and walls are visible—
a world that a god would see looking down
that day on the town—the way a god sees
both sides of all the human choices.
Here is an orange that fits in the palm of your hand
with segments like maps, and sweet, and hard.

—Emily Hiestand

sent by cable and was not there myself. I was not certain whether True Followers believed in communication with the dead. Perhaps they deplored it. They certainly disliked spirit mediums. Still, I felt I ought to tell him, so I said, "Dad, I'm glad you were my father, but I think I ought to play along with Uncle Will, don't you?" I waited for some kind of response—from inside myself, of course—but if there was any, I didn't hear it, perhaps because I had not been a True Follower since I left school.

I didn't say anything to my mother's side of the grave, because she disapproved of Uncle Will, but I sort of blew a kiss. Then I went and found Florrie Nightingale and took her to have coffee.

"I tried to call my father," I said. "But he didn't answer the phone."

"Did you and he talk much when he was alive?"

"Not really," I said.

"Well, that explains it, doesn't it?" she said.

That evening I took a small bottle of champagne to the ward. "Cheers, Dad," I said.

"Fizzy stuff gets up my nose," Uncle Will said. "But I'm glad you thought it worthwhile to get Taittinger. That's what I used to buy in my roistering days, when I still had a bit of the inheritance, you know, from Pa."

"Grandpa was quite well-to-do, wasn't he?"

"He crossed me out of his will. When I left after the row, he drove into town that same day to take my name out of his will. Then he came home and scratched my name out of the Register of Generations in the Bible. He scratched so hard he went right through the page, and through the next pages, right through to Leviticus, Ma said."

"What did you do after you had the row with him?"

"I got to hell out, of course. I thought if I stayed away a few weeks, Pa would miss me and want me back. I thought then I'd stay away for a while more, to punish him. Ma wrote that she and Arnold missed me, and Arnold prayed for me every night, but Pa almost had a heart attack whenever my name was mentioned. So Arnold had Pa all to himself."

"And then?"

"Well, son, there was the war, and this and that. I had a bit of bad luck, lost a job or two, picked up the pox. After a few years I went back to the farm. Pa was fading by then, but even so they wouldn't let me come into the house in case he saw me. I fixed up a sort of flat for myself over the stables. Stayed there for two years. Ran the farm. Arnold was supposed to, but he was too busy looking after Pa. Being his body servant, you might say. Remember how I taught you fishing?"

"Yes, Uncle. Yes, Dad. I caught a bream. You gave me a cigarette."

"Seemed a good idea at the time. I don't suppose you ever went fishing with Arnold."

"No, he took a poor view of idleness."

"See. We don't mind a bit of idleness, you and me. Birds of a feather."

ONE EVENING HE SAID, "NOT LONG TO GO NOW. Tell me about yourself. I need to know what sort of chap you are. Did you ever win a lottery, fly a plane, sleep with a black girl?"

"No, Dad, I never did."

"Me neither. But I bet you wanted to, eh? Like father, like son. I told you Pa cut me out of his will?"

"Yes."

"When the will was read, Arnold had been left a couple of thousand for looking after Pa, and the rest was to be divided equally among all the children, except me. Well, damn if Arnold doesn't up and say, 'Will is Pa's flesh and blood just like the rest of us, and he's been looking after the farm, so I think he should share too. He can have some of mine to start with.'"

"How exciting. And then?"

"You know, when the bros came for the funeral—"

"What's a bro?"

"Our older brothers called one another 'bro.' They were much older than Arnold and me. Almost like uncles. When they came for the funeral, some of them hadn't seen one another for ten years. They all hugged one another and said, 'My old bro' and 'My dear bro' and stuff like that, and remarked how big Arnold was. But to me they just said, 'Good day, Wilhelm.' Some of their wives didn't even greet me. When Ma saw it, she cried a little. They thought she was crying for Pa, but she was crying for me."

"You were telling me about the will."

"Arnold made them give me my share. The wives were dead against it, but some of the bros thought I might contest the will, so they all agreed." He chuckled. "Boy, what a time I had!"

Next evening he was lying very still. I took his hand, and he opened his eyes. "I said talk a few words to me," he said, almost inaudibly.

"You're not dead," I said.

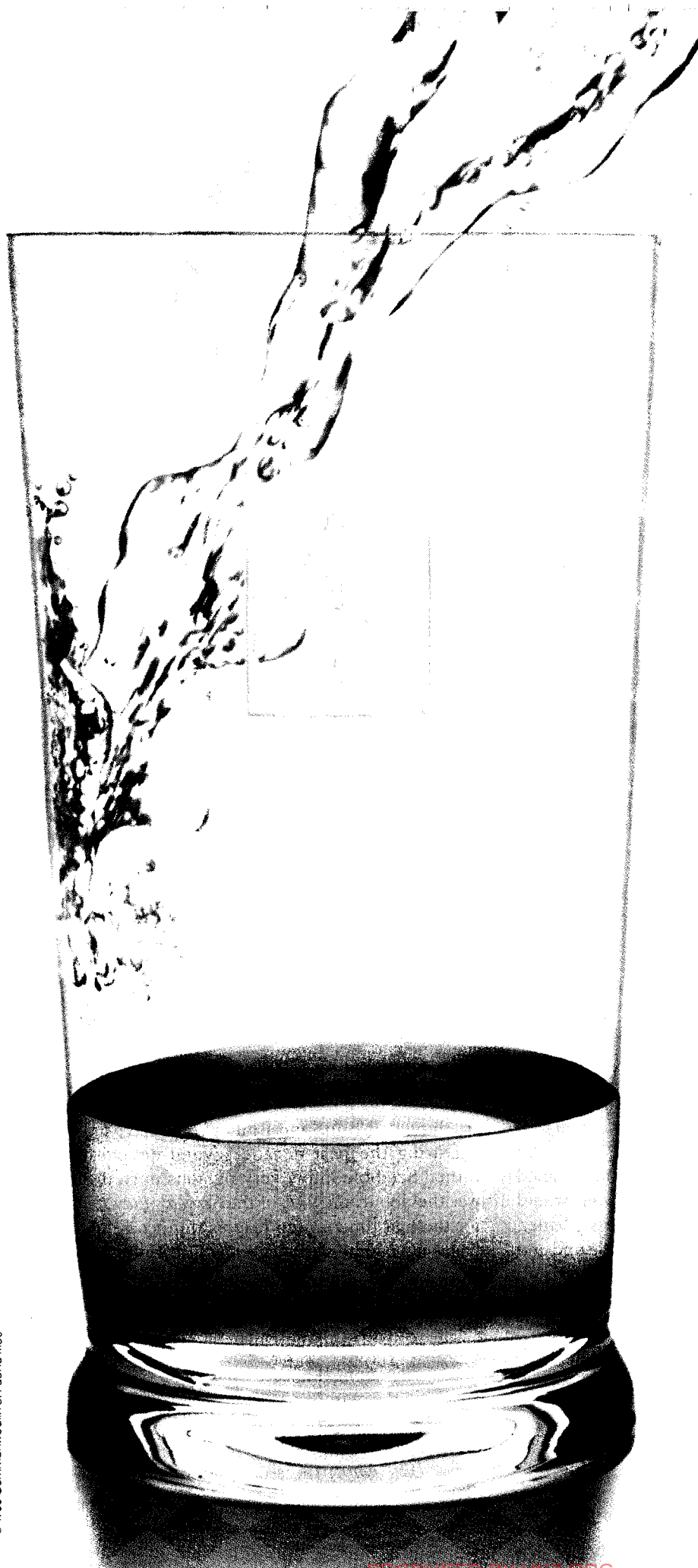
"Dearest boy," he whispered. "Bovril, eh?"

They reached me as I was leaving the parking area. He had "gone."

In the few minutes it took to get back to the ward, they had wheeled his bed to the deathbed position and curtained it. I shook his shoulder and said, "Dad, it's me. It's your Billy boy," and waited, half expecting him to respond and confess that he had been fantasizing about my mother.

After a while I took one of his hands and put it over the other and left him. Florrie Nightingale gave me a cup of coffee with a spoonful of medicinal brandy. "You qualify for it if you're bereaved," she said, and leaned comfortingly against me as she poured it. "Your uncle told me you wished you had been his son. He jeered at you a little, but one could see that it made him very happy."

She advised me about funeral arrangements and volunteered that if I had no one else to come with me to the cremation, she would, provided I could fix it to be when she was off duty. She said that perhaps I should take note of her name, which was not Florrie Nightingale but Elspeth Brunner, and she would be free for dinner afterward. □



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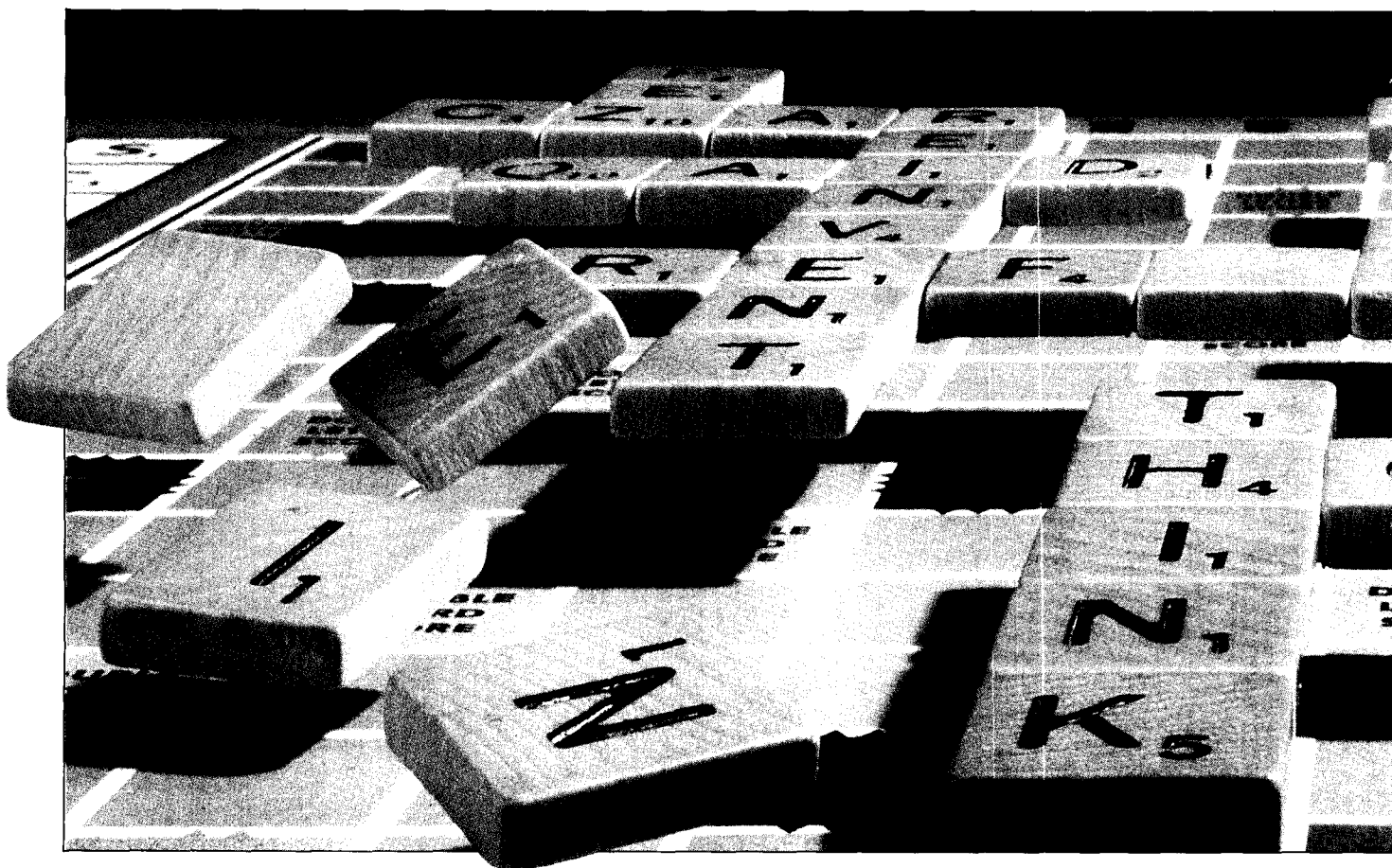
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THE SPIRIT YOU'VE BEEN LOOKING FOR.

RUM
OF
PUERTO
RICO



*Even to initiates,
Scrabble has yet to yield up all its secrets*

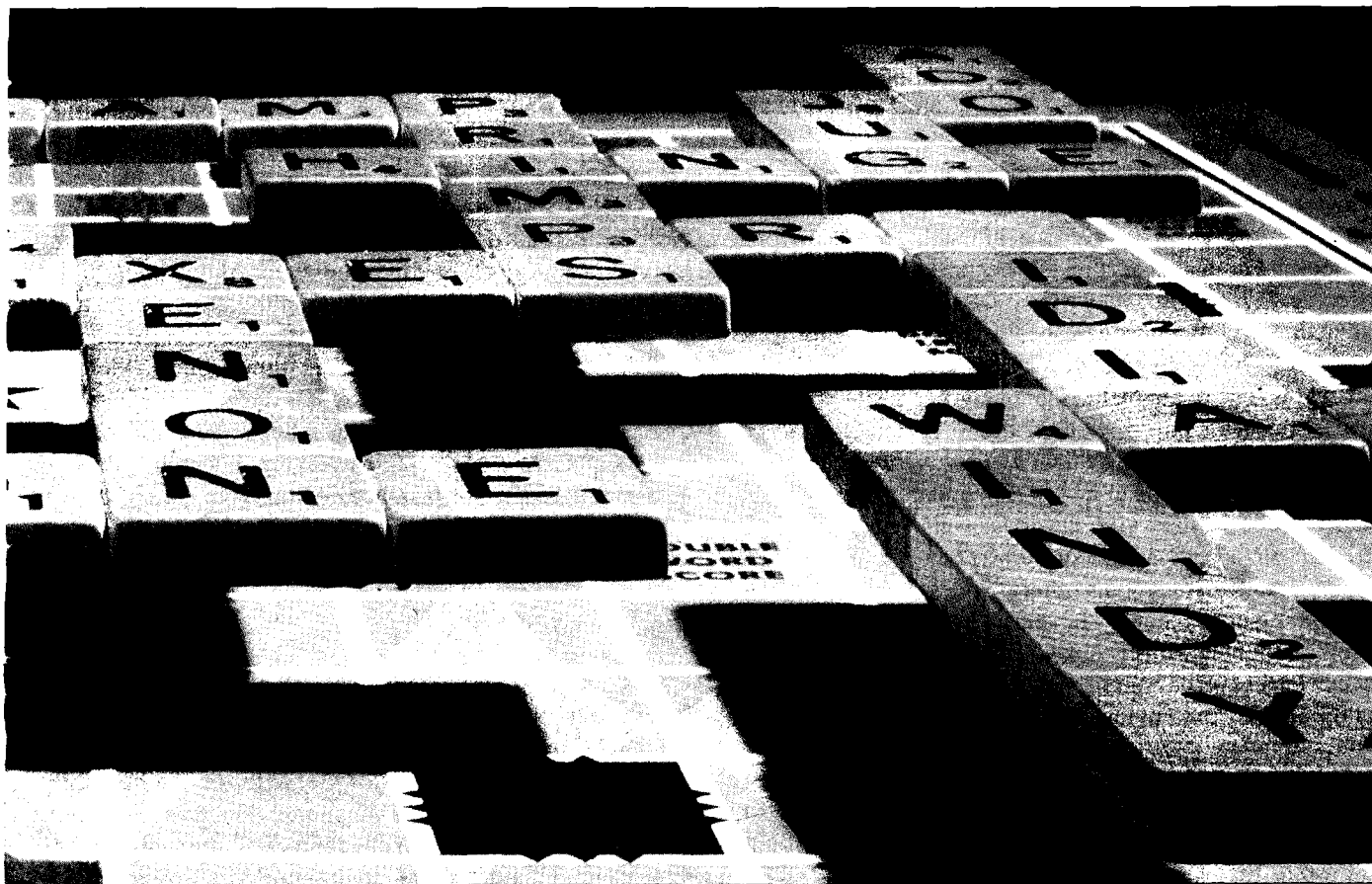
MASTERS OF THE TILES

BY BARRY CHAMISH

LIKE MANY OTHER AMERICANS IN 1933, ALFRED BUTTS was experiencing a degree of financial embarrassment, and he fervently hoped that a new game he had just devised would change his fortunes. Butts called the game Criss-Cross—an apt descriptor for what would later be known as Scrabble. He found a business partner, James Brunot, who worked the kinks out of the game and arranged for a professional to design the board. Butts and Brunot sold their game out of a Connecticut garage until, in the early 1950s, a Scrabble craze forced a move to larger premises and resulted, finally, in a licensing agreement with the games manufacturer Selchow & Righter (now a subsidiary of Coleco). Scrabble has proved enduring. Whereas Trivial Pursuit, which is also marketed by Selchow & Righter, and which in recent years outsold Scrabble, is looking more and more like a fad, Scrabble has assumed the august repute of chess and bridge. Scrabble sets can be found in 27 percent of all American households. The level

of play in organized clubs and tournaments far exceeds anything that Butts and Brunot could have anticipated.

During the past decade several developments have turned Scrabble into a very rigorous pursuit indeed. One was the debut, in 1977, of the *Scrabble Players News*, which for the first time united players from coast to coast. In its pages new strategies were explored, games and situations were analyzed, and puzzles of historic moment were presented. Next, in 1978, came the publication of *The Official Scrabble Players Dictionary (OSPD)*, by the G. & C. Merriam Company. This put an end to unseemly arguments over verification. If a word up to eight letters long—seven letters is the number a player has in his rack—does not appear in the *OSPD*, then it is not a legal Scrabble word. (For longer words, the authority is *Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary*.) In essence, tournament play suddenly had an additional set of rules. Finally, in 1980, a rating system for Scrabble players, modeled on that of the U.S.



Chess Federation, was developed by a Scrabble-playing mathematician, Daniel Pratt, who works for the Defense Department. Today the ratings are maintained by another mathematician, Alan Frank, who refined Pratt's system and now lets the world's finest Scrabble players know where they stand in relation to one another.

Today there are several thousand people in the English-speaking world who compete in Scrabble tournaments; many of them will convene next month in Las Vegas for the Western Championship, one of eighty annual North American tournaments. (North American Scrabble, by the way, is different from that played in Britain and in all Commonwealth countries except Canada and Australia. The British play a perverse game that is almost cooperative in nature, and they adamantly refuse to accept the *OSPD* as the final word in verification, using instead *Chambers 20th-Century Dictionary*. Outside North America and Australia, only Israel, the home of the Dead Sea Open, plays by American rules.) Of the Scrabble players who compete in tournaments, several hundred are considered masters of the game. Perhaps a score of the better players—among them Ronald Tickert (who is the top-ranked player worldwide), Joseph Edley, Charles Armstrong, Stephen Fisher, Daniel Pratt, Peter Morris, Joel Wapnick, Lester Schonbrun, Stephen Polatnick, and James Neuberger—might be considered grand masters. I am not a grand master, but I am good enough to have played some of them, and occasionally to have won.

A SCRABBLE MASTER IS NOT BORN; LIKE THE ALPHABET he uses, he is made. An enormous amount of training lies behind his apparent gift. First, all of the *OSPD*'s two-letter words must be memorized. Also learned are which ones can be pluralized and which ones cannot. For instance, *ka* can take an *s* but *xu* can't. Next, all three-letter words are learned by heart, both those that hook to two-letter words, like *kab*, and those that stand alone, like *neb*. After this, all four-letter words that hook to three-letter words (for example, *rani* and *taro*) must be memorized. Then all four-letter words are memorized. Short words are not a majority of all words in the language, but they are disproportionately important in Scrabble. In a typical game they account for three quarters of the words put down and for more than half the points scored. Knowing these two-, three-, and four-letter words makes possible the dumping of unwanted letters and the hoarding of important ones. This is known as rack management.

Learning all the English words of four letters is the most valuable of the memorizing operations. Just knowing which ones are verbs and which ones adjectives increases the likelihood of making "bingos"—that is, laying down all seven letters in one's rack, thereby earning fifty bonus points. For instance, if you know that *toit* is a verb, then you can make a bingo with *toiting*. Or if you remember that *logy* is an adjective, then *logiest* can clear your rack.

Mastering Scrabble does not, however, end at the fours. All five-letter words that hook to fours, like *ranid* and

taroc, must be learned. However, not even champions can memorize all five- and six-letter words, and these play a small role in the game. In fact, the only predictable situation in which knowing a five-letter-word list comes in handy is that of wanting to join a triple-letter square to the double-word-square square five places away.

Master players concentrate their efforts on the memorization of useful words only. To begin with, they learn longer hooks. For instance, *chore* can become *chorea*, which can become *choreal*. Also, they concentrate on learning what to do with vowel- or consonant-heavy racks. Four consonants and three vowels are the best combination for a seven-letter word. Think about it: how many five-letter words do you know with four vowels in them? A Scrabble master knows them all. Putting down *oorie*, *ourie*, *aecia*, *oidia*, or *zoeae* cleans out a vowel-heavy rack and gets points. How many words do you know with no vowels whatsoever (other than *y*)? The Scrabble master knows *nth*, *cwm*, *crwth*, *phph*, and *tsktsk*, among others, and so can deal with a consonant-heavy rack. He learns bingo words that are overbearingly vowelish. Ask a Scrabble grand master what five 8-letter words contain six vowels and he will answer, as if bored by the obviousness of the inquiry, *eulogiae*, *epopoeia*, *aboideau*, *aboiteau*, and *aureolae*.

Next to be studied is the so-called three-percent list. The three-percent list was pioneered by a psychologist, Michael Baron, of Albuquerque. It is based on the assumption that of the 76,000 bingos listed in the *OSPD*, most can be discarded as unlikely ever to appear on a Scrabble rack; a few thousand, however, will appear over and over again. There are, for example, two Vs in a Scrabble set. Trying to memorize bingos with Vs in them is inefficient, because picking one is relatively unlikely. However, there are twelve Es in the game, eight Os, six Rs, six Ns, and so on. The chance that on your first draw you will pick any of the twelve letters contained in Baron's list of bingos is three percent or better—hence the name. Baron also discovered that certain six-letter combinations occur with uncanny frequency. By learning the six-letter words and all the possible sevens that can be made from them, players can digest an enormous number of new words and immediately find the bingo when a familiar combination is picked. The letters in *satine* can form sixty other words with the addition of a seventh letter, and the letters in *retina* can form almost as many.

Consider the word *amines*, meaning certain chemical compounds. It has six letters, and by adding a seventh you can make a bingo. Try it. Okay, you've failed. But if you were familiar with the list, you wouldn't have fumbled with the letters, arranging and rearranging them for the solution. You would say *amines* with a *d* is *sideman* or *maidens*. With a *g* it's *seaming* or *gamines*; with an *l*, *seminal*; with an *r*, *seminar* or *marines*; and so on. The strategy is to assemble a six-letter word known to be fertile territory for seven-letter words and just add the missing letter from memory. Thus, the astute player assembles *satine* or *amines*, recalls his list, and makes *etesian* or *samisen*.

Another tool is the Scrabble "bonus-word" list, which was assembled by three competitive players, Stuart Goldman, David Schulman, and Edward Andy. Schulman is a contributor to the *Oxford English Dictionary* and the author of *An Annotated Bibliography of Cryptography*. He has written many articles about words for *American Speech* magazine and would be expected to be a Scrabble star. Goldman holds the record for the most official Scrabble games played in a lifetime, but neither he nor Andy has anything in his background extraneous to Scrabble to suggest a mastery of words. The Scrabble bonus-word list is similar to the three-percent list, but it takes into account all letters, even the rare high-scoring ones. It is not as mathematically precise as Baron's list but rather reflects the combined instincts of three great Scrabble players. It's arranged in alphabetical order. For instance, if you have AAABLST on your rack and you're stumped, and after the game you look at the bonus list, you will discover, to your amazement, that you had not one but three bingos: *atabals*, *balatas*, and *albatas*.

WHATEVER THE REGIMEN RECOMMENDED BY THE experts, the fact remains that memorization is a highly personal act. One memorizes more easily what one relates to or finds congenially systematic. A common tool for word memory is mnemonics, or association. One example is the ladder trick—building words by adding a letter at a time. Here are three examples:

he, her, herm, therm, therme, thermel, thermels

pa, pal, opal, copal, copalm, copalms

lo, log, logy, ology, oology, zoology

All these words, by the way, can be found in the *OSPD*.

Joel Wapnick is a professor of music at McGill University and Canada's Scrabble champion. He has memorized more than 16,000 bingos and is considered one of Scrabble's top theoreticians. In the *Scrabble Players News* he had some words of wisdom for those who might wish to memorize almost 20,000 mostly ridiculous words:

There are many mnemonic devices that all of us use to simplify the memorization process. Suppose for some strange reason you want to memorize the following nine words: victoria, ophidian, diplopia, fixation, miaowing, hominian, himation, hospitia and pavilion. Those happen to be my list of 8 letter words that have the four vowels aiiio plus two high point tiles.

If you simply rehearse them over and over again, it's not likely that they will be remembered over a long period of time. Instead you might look for some structure in the words. For example words 6, 7 and 8 begin with the letter H. Words 1, 2, 3, and 4 have a pattern in their last letters; a-n-a-n. Or perhaps the number 41243 can be remembered—it stands for the tile value of the first letters of words 1 through 5, and can serve to cue these words in.

Knowing many words is invaluable in two ways. First, it saves time. In tournament play each competitor has only twenty-five minutes to complete a game. If he goes over the time limit, he is penalized ten points per extra minute. Second, it reduces the importance of luck as a factor in the game. Because letters are chosen blind, anyone can get bad ones. (This assumes that one is playing honestly; there are several ways to cheat, the most notorious being the practice of "brailling"—feeling the tiles in the bag in search of a blank or an S.) It is estimated that the outcome of high-level Scrabble games is determined by luck in one game out of six. The percentage, of course, increases with ineptitude, and with ignorance of useful words. Because of the recent upsurge in word knowledge, owing to the introduction of new word lists and memorization schemes, Scrabble strategy has changed completely during the past decade. It used to be considered smart to block or clog up a board so that no one could put down a bingo. Today the top players hate it when their hard memory work goes for naught, and they tend to play wide-open, aggressive Scrabble in the hope of putting down a three-percent word they have learned.

One strategy that has been the subject of recent debate is the hoarding of certain letter combinations. For instance, if your rack held E, R, and S, you would play the other four tiles and pick again, since many four-letter words can take an *ers* suffix or an *re* at the beginning and an *s* at the end. (The idea is eventually to draw letters that in conjunction with ERS will produce a bingo.) The ERS combination is usually still hoarded. But what if you pick ING (or NG and see an open I on the board)? Do you play your other letters and hope that the next draw will provide a verb to which you can add the ING? There is serious controversy in the Scrabble world over ING. Many of the best players say, "Break up the combination if it means better points and position. I know so many words that I can keep digging for new letters instead of wasting my time hoping for a verb." Some very good players demur, arguing that so many bingos end in *ing* that it's a mistake to break the combination up. To be in favor of breaking it up shows that you have great confidence in your vocabulary. In the view of some players, it also shows that you have a lack of common sense.

Other questions, too, have yet to be answered definitively—for example, the proper use of the Q in midgame. Without a U, the Q is almost useless. Only a few words accept *q* without its natural mate. (They are *qaid*, *qoph*, *qindar*, *qintar*, and *faqir*.) Because the Q is commonly exchanged—at the cost of a turn—it often appears in the end game. Any player unable to rid himself of it is not only prevented from making a bingo but also loses twenty points if the letter is still in his rack when his opponent runs out of letters. The Q has been considered more thoroughly than any other consonant except the S. Its frequency of appearance at every position in a seven-letter word has been tallied. Still the arguments rage. When is it wise to dump the Q? When is it wise to hold onto it? How can I stick my op-

ponent with it and avoid having it boomerang into my rack again?

There are aspects of Scrabble that are still dominated by luck. For instance, if two players of good but equal ability pair off, the one who picks the lowest letter and starts first has a substantially better chance of eventually winning. And there is no explaining the existence of streaks and slumps, which most players have experienced. Furthermore, there have been many average players who have surged beyond expectations and played like champions, only to regain typical form and never do so again.

Yet ultimately, the best players have reduced the element of luck considerably. When not making lists, they are inventing new challenges and puzzles to keep their minds flexible and their word knowledge growing. One theoretician, Joseph Leonard, who lives in Philadelphia, has tried to find every bingo in the *OSPD* that is valid both forward and back. Some of the pairs he has found are *stinker-reknits*, *deliver-reviled*, *desserts-stressed*, and *sallets-stellas*. Other players have tried to find the highest-scoring plays possible. Here we enter the Scrabble player's flourishing fantasy world.

IN THEORY ONE CAN SCORE WELL OVER A THOUSAND points in a Scrabble game, with the help of one or two brilliant moves. In practice it is very hard to score above 600. The highest score yet recorded in club competition is 724, achieved by Bill Blevin against eighty-three-year-old Daisy Webb, who compiled a score not much higher than her age. Despite Blevin's undeniable skill against Webb, the score that is considered the highest ever achieved against reasonable competition is 719, which Christopher Reslock racked up in actual tournament play.

It is easy to imagine getting almost half as many points on a single move as Reslock got in his entire record-setting game. What if someone has made the word *lappers* down to the middle triple-word square on the left side of the board? You can put a C on it, making *clappers*, and already you have one triple-word play. Then you make *claqueurs* across the top two triple-word squares, utilizing two letters already on the board. Now you have a triple-triple word, the value of which is multiplied by nine, your Q has landed on a double word score, and you have the triple off *clappers* plus the bonus bingo points. Your total for one turn is 353 points, a not uncreditable total for a whole game.

The *Scrabble Players News* in 1982 asked its readers to find the highest possible score for one turn using words that appear in the *OSPD*. All across America players worked on the problem. One of the best solutions was submitted by Kyle Corbin, of Raleigh, North Carolina, who shared first place in the competition with Alan Frank and Stephen Root, a computer programmer who lives in Westboro, Massachusetts. Corbin imagined a game in which the first twelve turns resulted in the configuration shown below, with the C in *chapeau* on the center square of the board and the M in *mahjong* as a blank. On the thirteenth

turn a player with the letters M, X, M, I, Z, N, and G in his rack can make the word *maximizing* down the right-hand side, score a bingo, and in the process make the new words *buckram*, *chapeaux*, *prewarm*, *quartz*, *bunn*, and *mah-jongg*. The total score: 613 points.

V
B U C K R A
L A
C H A P E A U
L E I
P R E W A R
A
Q U A R T
A I
B U N
M A H J O N G

The next step, of course, was to figure out the highest possible score in a complete Scrabble game (using only words from the *OSPD*). Once again Scrabble's finest minds went to work. The highest score to date was found by Stephen Root. Root devised a game in which 2,354 points were scored, 1,177 by each player.

V F L A P J A C K
A U O
N I N E T E E N T
Q C P E E
U S O R T A B L Y R
I I R I F
S O U E L
H A R R O W I N G V U
E D A M
S Y E T M
D E A E R A T E O
T S X
I I
D O E I D O L O N
W H I Z B A N G S G

If you want to follow the course of this hypothetical game on your own board, you need to know that the final N in *function* is the center square, and that the words were played in the following order: *unction*, *arrowing*, *ideation*, *whizbang*, *sortably*, *whizbangs*, *deaerate*, *eidolon*, *nineteen*, *pyruvates*, *pe*, *in*, *vanquish*, *coterie*, *vanquishes*, *ye*, *do*, *if*, *flummoxing*, *flapjack*. The final S in *vanquishes* and the T in *ideation* are blanks, and the second player gets two points for the T left in the first player's rack when the game ends.

SCRABBLE, LIKE CHESS, IS A VAST GAME. THE ODDS OF two forty-move chess games ever being exactly the same are all but infinitely remote. The same holds for Scrabble games. There are just too many possibilities for the play to become repetitive. New problems, solutions, analyses, and arguments keep cropping up.

All theorizing stops at a major tournament, however. The mood among the players beforehand is one of great anxiety and expectation. Sometimes the tension brings out legendary performances. Jerry Lerman, a very good player, was once matched with the former North American champion, Joseph Edley. Edley had forsaken career advancement for Scrabble, working as a night watchman so that he could learn and memorize and practice. He does not often lose. But Lerman played brilliantly, emerging with a 499–499 tie, the highest-scoring tie in Scrabble history.

Just as often the tension causes errors, the most ridiculous being the result of an affliction called Scrabble blindness. Its major symptom is an inability to see the obvious. I once heard the word *apply* challenged at a tournament. (“*Apply*? I’ve heard of *limey* and *orangey*. But *apply*?”) I myself have challenged the word *who*. I had just finished memorizing the four-letter list, and *whoa* was a new word of mine. I stared at the *who*, mumbled “whoa” to myself several times, and finally declared that *who* takes an *a*. My opponent called the tournament judge over to look up the word in the *OSPD*. He stared at *who*, turned a few pages of the dictionary, and walked away saying, “I’m not going to look that up.” I yelled that he had to by the rules of the tournament. He still refused. I finally looked it up myself and was shocked to see that *who* didn’t need an *a*. It wasn’t until the game ended that I realized I had actually challenged *who*.

During a tournament the most serious players do not socialize between games. They stay in their rooms and study. They hate it when people say, “But it’s only a game.” To them it is at the very least a profound intellectual and artistic experience. Is it too much to suppose that there may be a religious element to this experience as well? The cabala, in its way, is an ancient Judaic form of Scrabble. Each Hebrew letter was assigned a value, and once a word was formed the combined total of the letters revealed a deeper message from God. When one sees two serious Scrabble players at their game, it is not hard to imagine them as cabalist sages in meditation; or to wonder if this will be the time when the word *zyzzyva*—that rarest of all bingos (and one that requires blanks to be used for two of the *zs*)—makes manifest the presence of the divine. □

A Short Story

3

THE HALFWAY DINER

BY JOHN SAYLES

SOME OF THE OTHER girls can read on the way but I get sick. I need somebody to talk to, it don't matter who so much, just someone to shoot the breeze with, pass time. *Si no puedes platicar, no puedes vivir*, says my mother and though I don't agree that the silence would kill me, twelve hours is a long stretch. So when Goldilocks climbs on all big-eyed and pale and almost sits herself in Renee's seat by the window I take pity and put her wise.

"You can't sit in that seat," I say.

Her face falls like she's a kid on the playground about to get whipped. "Pardon?" she says. *Pardon*.

"That's Renee's seat," I tell her. "She's got a thing about it. Something about the light."

"Oh. Sorry." She looks at the other empty seats like they're all booby-trapped.

Lucky for her I got a soft heart and a mouth that needs exercise.

"You can sit here if you want."

She just about pees with relief and sits by me. She's not packing any magazines or books which is good cause like I said, I get sick. If the person next to me reads I get nosy and then I get sick plus a stiff neck.

"My name's Pam," she says.

"It would be. I'm Lourdes." We shake hands. I remember the first time I made the ride, four years ago, I was sure somebody was gonna cut me with a razor or something. I figured they'd all of them be women who'd done time themselves, a bunch of big tough mamas with tattoos on their arms who'd snarl out stuff like "Whatsit to you, sis-



ter?" Well, we're not exactly the Girl Scout Jamboree, but mostly people are pretty nice to each other, unless something happens like with Lee and Delphine.

"New meat?" I ask her.

"Pardon?"

"Is your guy new meat up there?" I ask. "Is this his first time inside?"

She nods and hangs her head like it's the disgrace of the century. Like we're not all on this bus for the same reason.

"You hear from him yet?"

"I got a letter. He says he doesn't know how he can stand it."

Now this is good. It's when they start to get comfortable up there you got to worry. We had this girl on the bus, her guy made parole first time up, only the minute he gets home he starts to mope. Can't sleep nights, can't concentrate, mutters to himself all the time, won't take an interest

in anything on the outside. She lives with this a while, then one night they have a fight and really get down and he confesses how he had this kid in his cell, this little *mariquita*, and they got to doing it, you know, like some of the guys up there will do, only this guy fell in *love*. These things happen. And now he's *jealous*, see, cause his kid is still inside with all these *men*, right, and damn if a week later he doesn't go break his parole about a dozen different ways so he gets sent back up. She had to give up on him. To her it's a big tragedy, which is understandable, but I suppose from another point of view it's kind of romantic, like *Love Story*, only instead of Ali McGraw you got a sweetboy doing a nickel for armed robbery.

"What's your guy in for?" I ask.

Pam looks at her feet. "Auto theft."

"Not *that*. I mean how much *time*."

"The lawyer says he'll have to do at least a year and a half."

"You don't go around asking what a guy's rap is in here," I tell her. "That's like *personal*, you know? But the length of sentence—hey, everybody counts the days."

"Oh."

"A year and a half is small change," I tell her. "He'll do that with his eyes closed."

The other girls start coming in then. Renee comes to her seat and sets up her equipment. She sells makeup, Renee, and her main hobby is wearing it. She's got this stand that hooks onto the back of the seat in front of her, with all these drawers and compartments and mirrors and stuff and an empty shopping bag for all the tissues she goes through during the trip. I made the mistake of sitting next to her once and she bent my ear about lip gloss for three hours straight, all the way to the Halfway Diner. You wouldn't think there'd be that much to say about it. Then after lunch she went into her sales pitch and I surrendered and bought some eye goop just so I wouldn't have to hear her say "our darker-complected customers" one more time. I mean it's all relative, right, and I'd rather be my shade than all pasty-faced like Renee, look like she's never been touched by the sun. She's seen forty in the rearview mirror though she does her best to hide it, and the big secret that everybody knows is that it's not her husband she goes to visit but her *son*, doing adult time. She just calls him "my Bobby."

Mrs. Tucker settles in front with her knitting, looking a little tired. Her guy is like the Birdman of Alcatraz or something, he's been in since back when they wore stripes like in the Jimmy Cagney movies, and she's been coming up faithfully every weekend for thirty, forty years, something incredible like that. He killed a cop way back when is what Yayo says the word on the yard is. She always sits by Gus, the driver, and they have these long lazy Mr. and Mrs. conversations while she knits and he drives. Not that there's anything going on between them off the bus, but you figure over the years she's spent more time with Gus than with her husband. He spaces out sometimes, Gus, the road is so straight and long, and she'll bring him back with a poke from one of her needles.

The ones we call the sisters go and sit in the back, talking nonstop. Actually they're married to brothers who are up for the same deal but they look alike and are stuck together like glue so we call them the sisters. They speak one of those Indio dialects from up in the mountains down south, so I can't pick out much of what they say. What my mother would call *mojadas*. Like she come over on the *Mayflower*.

Dolores comes in, who is a sad case.

"I'm gonna tell him this trip," she says. "I'm really gonna do it."

"Attagirl."

"No, I really am. It'll break his heart but I got to."

"It's the only thing to do, Dolores."

She has this boyfriend inside, Dolores, only last year she met some nice square Joe and got married. She didn't tell him about her guy inside and so far hasn't told her guy inside about the Joe. She figures he waits all week breathless for her visit, which maybe is true and maybe is flattering herself, and if she gives him the heave-ho he'll fall apart and kidnap the warden or something. Personally I think she likes to collect guilt, like some people collect stamps or coins or dead butterflies or whatever.

"I just feel so *guilty*," she says and moves on down across from the sisters.

We got pretty much all kinds on the bus, black girls, white girls, Chicanas like me who were born here and new fish from just across the border, a couple of Indian women from some tribe down the coast, even one Chinese girl, whose old man is supposed to be a very big cheese in gambling. She wears clothes I would kill for, this girl, only of course they wouldn't look good on me. Most of your best clothes are designed for the flat-chested type, which is why the fashion pages are full of Orientals and anorexics like Renee.

This Pam is another one, the kind that looks good in a man's T-shirt, looks good in almost anything she throws on. I decide to be nice to her anyway.

"You gonna eat all that?"

She's got this big plastic sack of food under her feet, wrapped sandwiches and fruit and what looks like a pie.

"Me? Oh—no, I figure, you know—the food inside—"

"They don't let you bring food in."

Her face drops again. "No?"

"Only cigarettes. One carton a month."

"He doesn't smoke."

"That's not the point. Cigarettes are like money inside. Your guy wants anything, wants anything done, he'll have to pay in smokes."

"What would he want to have done?"

I figure I should spare her most of the possibilities, so I just shrug. "Whatever. We get to the Halfway you get some change, load up on Camels from the machine. He'll thank you for it."

She looks down at the sack of goodies. She sure isn't going to eat it herself, not if she worked at it for a month. I can picture her dinner plate alone at home, full of the kind of stuff my Chuy feeds his gerbil. A celery cruncher.

"You want some of this?" she says, staring into the sack.

"No thanks, honey," I tell her. "I'm saving myself for the Halfway Diner."

LATER ON I WAS STRUCK BY HOW IT HAD ALREADY happened, the dice had already been thrown, only they didn't know it. So they took the whole trip up sitting together and talking and palling around unaware that they weren't friends anymore.

Lee and Delphine are as close as the sisters only nobody would ever mistake them for relatives, Lee being blonde

and Delphine being one of our darker-complected customers. Lee is natural blonde, unlike certain cosmetics saleswomen I could mention, with light blue eyes and a build that borders on the chunky although she would die to hear me say it. Del is thin and sort of elegant and black like you don't see too much outside of those documentaries on TV where people stick wooden spears in lions. *Negro como el fondo de la noche* my mother would say and on Del it looks great. *The only feature they share is a similar nose*, Del because she was born that way and Lee because of a field-hockey accident.

Maybe it was because they're both nurses or maybe just because they have complementary personalities, but somehow they found each other on the bus and since before I started riding they've been tight as ticks. You get the feeling they look forward to the long drive to catch up on each other's lives. They don't socialize off the bus, almost nobody does, but how many friends spend twelve hours a week together? Some of the black girls are friendly with some of the white girls, and us Chicanas can either spread around or sit together and talk home-talk, but black and white as tight as Lee and Del is pretty rare. Inside, well, inside you stay with your own, that's the beginning and the end of it. But inside is a world I don't even like to think about.

They plunk down across from us, Del lugging all these magazines—*Cosmo*, *People*, *Vogue*, *Essence*—that they sort of read and sort of make fun of, and Lee right away starts in on the food. Lee is obsessed with food the way a lot of borderline-chunky girls are, she can talk forever about what she didn't eat that day. She sits and gets a load of the sack at Pam's feet.

"That isn't food, is it?" she asks.

"Yeah," Pam apologizes. "I didn't know."

"Let's see it."

Obediently Pam starts shuffling through her sack, holding things up for a little show-and-tell. "I got this, and this," she says, "and this, I thought, maybe, they wouldn't have—I didn't know."

It's all stuff you buy at the bus station—sandwiches that taste like the cellophane they're wrapped in filled with that already-been-chewed kind of egg and chicken and tuna salad, stale pies stuffed with mealy applesauce, spotted fruit out of a machine. From all reports the food is better in the joint.

"How old are you, honey?" I ask.

"Nineteen."

"You ever cook at home?" Lee asks.

Pam shrugs. "Not much. Mostly I eat—you know, like salads. Maybe some fish sticks."

Del laughs. "I tried that fish-sticks routine once when Richard was home," she says. "He ask me, 'What is this?' That's their code for 'I don't like the look of it.' It could be something *basic*, right, like a fried egg starin up at em, they still say, 'What's this?' So I say, 'It's fish, baby.' He says, 'If it's fish, which end is the *head* and which is the *tail*?' When I tell him it taste the same either way he says

he doesn't eat nothin with square edges like that, on account of inside they always be cookin everything in these big cake pans and serve it up in squares—square egg, square potato, square macaroni. That and things served out in ice-cream scoops. Unless it really *is* ice cream Richard don't want no *scoops* on his plate."

"Lonnie's got this thing about chicken bones," Lee says, "bones of any kind, but especially chicken ones. Can't stand to look at em while he's eating."

"Kind of rules out the Colonel, doesn't it?"

"Naw," she says. "He *loves* fried chicken. We come back with one of them buckets, you know, with the biscuits and all, and I got to go perform surgery in the kitchen before we can eat. He keeps callin in—'It ready yet, hon? It ready yet? I'm starvin here.' I'll tell you, they'd of had those little McNugget things back before he went up our marriage woulda been in a lot better shape."

They're off to the races then, Lee and Del, yakking away, and they sort of close up into a society of two. Blondie is sitting there with her tuna-mash sandwiches in her lap, waiting for orders, so I stow everything in the sack and kick it deep under the seat.

"We get to the Halfway," I tell her, "we can dump it."

SOMETIMES I WONDER ABOUT GUS. THE HIGHWAY IS SO straight, cutting up through the Valley with the ground so flat and mostly dried up, like all its effort goes into those little square patches of artichokes or whatever you come past and after that it just got no more green in it. What can he be thinking about, all these miles, all these trips, up and down, year after year? He don't need to think to do his *yups* and *uh-huhs* at Mrs. Tucker, for that you can go on automatic pilot like I do with my Blanca when she goes into one of her stories about the tangled who-likes-who in her class. It's a real soap opera, *Dallas* for fifth-graders, but not what you need to concentrate on over breakfast. I wonder if Gus counts the days like we do, if there's a retirement date in his head, a release from the bus. Except to Mrs. Tucker he doesn't say but three things. When we first leave he says, "Headin out, ladies, take your seats." When we walk into the Halfway he always says, "Make it simple, ladies, we got a clock to watch." And when we're about to start the last leg, after dinner, he says, "Sweet dreams, ladies, we're bringin it home." Those same three things, every single trip. Like Mrs. Tucker with her blue sweater, always blue. Sometimes when I can't sleep and things are hard and awful and I can't see how they'll ever get better I'll lie awake and invent all these morbid thoughts, sort of torture myself with ideas, and I always start thinking that it's really the same exact sweater, that she goes home and pulls it apart stitch by stitch and starts from scratch again next trip. Not cause she wants to but cause she has to, it's her part of the punishment for what her husband done.

Other times I figure she just likes the color blue.

For the first hour or so Renee does her face. Even with

good road and a fairly new bus this takes a steady hand, but she is an artist. Then she discovers Pam behind her, a new victim for her line of cosmetics, and starts into her pitch, opening with something tactful like, "You always let your hair go like that?" I'm dying for Pam to say, "Yeah, whatsit to you, sister?" but she is who she is and pretty soon Renee's got her believing it's at least a misdemeanor to leave the house without eye-liner on. I've heard all this too many times so I put my head back and close my eyes and aim my radar past it over to Lee and Del.

They talk about their patients like they were family. They talk about their family like they were patients. Both are RNs, they work at different hospitals but both on the ward. Lee has got kids and she talks about them, Del doesn't but wants some and she talks about that. They talk about how Del can eat twice as much as Lee but Del stays thin and Lee gets chunky. They talk about their guys, too, but usually not till we get pretty close to the facility.

"My Jimmy," Lee says, "is now convinced he's the man of the house. This is a five-year-old squirt, he acts like he's the Papa Bear."

"He remembers his father?"

"He likes to think he does, but he doesn't. His favorite saying these days is 'Why should I?'"

"Uh-oh."

"At least he doesn't go around saying he's an orphan like his sister. I introduce her, 'This is my daughter, Julie,' right, she says, 'Hi, I'm a orphan.' Cute."

"I used to do that," says Delphine. "Evertime my daddy spanked me that's what I'd spread round the neighborhood."

"So Julie says she's an orphan and Jimmy says his father works for the state."

Del laughs. "That's true enough."

"And he picks up all this stuff in the neighborhood. God I want to get out of there. Lonnie makes parole this rotation I'm gonna get him home and get his head straight and get us moved outa there."

"Like to the country or something?"

"Just anywheres it isn't so mean and he's not near his asshole so-called buddies."

"Yeah—"

"And I want—oh, I don't know, it sounds kinda stupid, really—"

"What?" Del says.

"I want a *dishwasher*."

Del laughs again. Lee is embarrassed.

"You know what I mean—"

"Yeah, I know—"

"I want something in my life I just get it started and then it takes care of itself."

"I hear you *talkin*—"

"The other night Jimmy—now I know some of this is from those damn He-Man cartoons and all, but some of it



is not having a father, I swear—he's in their room doing his prayers. He does this thing, the nuns told him praying is just talking to God, that's the new breed of nuns, right, so you'll go by their room and you'll hear Jimmy still up, having like these one-sided telephone conversations. 'Uh-huh, yeah, sure, I will, no problem, I'll try, uh-huh, uh-huh,' and he thinks he's talking with *God*, see, like a kid does with an imaginary friend. Or maybe he really *is* talking to God, how would I know? Anyhow, the other night I peek in and he's doing one of these numbers only now he's got that tough-guy look I hate so much pasted on his face like all the other little punks in the neighborhood and he's quiet for a long time, listening, and then he kind of sneers and says—'Why should I?' "

WE ALL SORT OF PRETEND THE FOOD IS BETTER AT the Halfway than it really is. Not that it's bad—it's okay, but nothing to write home about. Elvira, who runs the place, won't use a microwave, which makes me happy. I'm convinced there's vibes in those things that get into the food and ten years from now there'll be a national scandal. Whenever I have something from a microwave I get bad dreams, I swear it, so if something comes out a little lukewarm from her kitchen I don't complain.

The thing is, Elvira really seems to look forward to seeing us, looks forward to all the noise and hustle a busload

ing halfway between the city and the facility was what she had in mind, though.

When we bust in and spill out around the room there's only one other customer, a skinny old lizard in a Tecate cap and a T-shirt, never once looking up from his grilled-cheese sandwich.

"Make it simple, ladies," Gus says. "We got a clock to watch."

At the Halfway it's pretty hard to make it anything but simple. When they gave out the kits at Diner Central, Elvira went for bare essentials. She's got the fly-strip hanging by the door with a dozen little boogers stuck to it, got the

cornflakes pyramided on a shelf, the specials hand-printed on paper plates stuck on the wall behind the counter, the morning's Danishes crusting over under their plastic hood, the lemon and chocolate cream pies with huge bouffants of meringue behind sliding glass, a cigarette machine, a phone booth, and a machine that tells your exact weight for a quarter which Lee feeds both coming in and going out.

"Have your orders ready, girls!" Elvira calls as we settle at the counter and in the booths, pretty much filling the place. "I want to hear numbers."

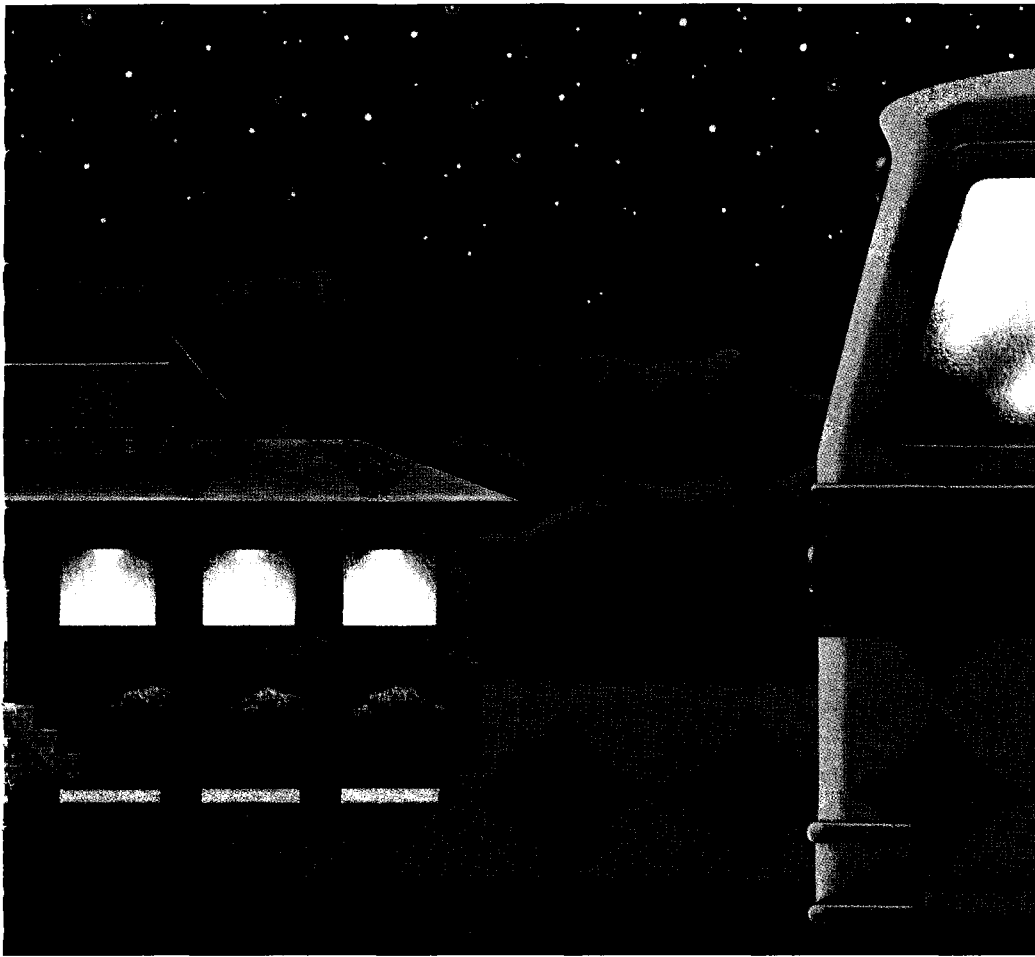
Elvira starts at one end of the counter and her girl Cheryl does the booths. Cheryl always seems like she's about to come apart, sighing a lot, scratching things out, breaking her pencil points. A nervous kid. What there is to be ner-

vous about way out there in the middle of nowhere I couldn't tell you, but she manages. I'm sitting at the counter with Mrs. Tucker on one side, Pam on the other, then Lee and Del. Lee and Del get talking about their honeymoons while Pam goes off to pump the cigarette machine.

of hungry women carry into the place, no matter what it is that brung them together. I imagine pulling into someplace different, with the name of the facility rolled up into the little destination window at the front of the bus, us flocking in and the waitresses panicking, the cooks ready to mutiny, the other customers sure we're pickpockets, prostitutes, baby-snatchers—no way José. So maybe the food here tastes better cause it comes through Elvira, all the square edges rounded off.

She's a big woman, Elvira, and if the country about here had a face it would look like hers. Kind of dry and cracked and worn, but friendly. She says she called the Halfway because everyplace on earth is halfway between somewhere and somewhere else. I don't think be-

"So anyhow," says Lee, "he figures we'll go down to Mexico, that old bit about how your money travels further down there? I don't know how *far* it goes, but after that honeymoon I know how *fast*. He was just trying to be sweet, really, he figured he was gonna show me this wonderful time, cause he's been there and I haven't and he knows what to order and I don't and he knows where to go and all that, only he *doesn't*, you know, he just *thinks* he



does. Which is the whole thing with Lonnie—he dreams things up and pretty soon he believes they're *true*, right, so he's more surprised than anybody when the shit hits the fan."

"Sounds familiar," says Del.

"So he's heard of this place—jeez, it's so long ago—Santa Maria de la Playa, something like that—" Lee looks to me for help. "You must know it, Lourdes. It's on the coast—"

MOCCASIN FLOWERS

All my life,
so far,
I have loved
more than one thing,
including the mossy hooves
of dreams, including
the spongy litter
under the tall trees.
In spring
the moccasin flowers
reach for the crackling
lick of the sun
and burn down. Sometimes,
in the shadows,
I see the hazy eyes,
the lamb-lips
of oblivion,
its deep drowse,
and I can imagine a new nothing
in the universe,
the matted leaves splitting
open, revealing
the black planks
of the stairs.
But all my life—so far—
I have loved best
how the flowers rise
and open, how
the pink lungs of their bodies
enter the fire of the world
and stand there shining
and willing—the one
thing they can do before
they shuffle forward
into the floor of darkness, they
become the trees.

—Mary Oliver

"Lots of coast down there."

"There's like these mountains, and the ocean—"

"Sorry," I tell her. "I've never been to Mexico."

Delphine can't feature this. "You're shittin me," she says. "*You?*"

"You ever been to Africa?"

Del cracks up, which is one of the things I like about her. She's not oversensitive about that stuff. Usually.

"Anyway," says Lee, "he says to me, 'Baby, we're talkin Paradise here, we're talkin Honeymoon Heaven. I got this deal—"

"They *always* got a deal," says Del.

Elvira comes by then with her pad, working fast but friendly all the time. "Hey, girls," she says, "how's it going? Mrs. Tucker?"

"Just the water," Mrs. Tucker says. "I'm not really hungry."

She doesn't look too good, Mrs. Tucker, kind of drawn around the eyes. Elvira shakes her head.

"Not good to skip lunch, Mrs. Tucker. You got a long ride ahead."

"Just the water, thank you."

Lee and Del get the same thing every week. "Let's see, we got a Number Three and a Number Five, mayo on the side," Elvira says. "Ice tea or lemonade?"

They both go for the lemonade and then Pam comes back dropping packs of Camels all over.

"How bout you, hon?"

"Um could I see a menu?" More cigarettes tumble from her arms. I see that Pam is one of those people who is accident-prone for life, and that her marrying a car thief is no coincidence. A catastrophe waiting to happen, this girl. Elvira jerks a thumb to the wall. Pam sees the paper plates. "Oh um—what are you having?"

"Number Three," says Lee.

"Number Five," says Delphine.

"Oh. I'll have a Number Four, please. And a club soda?"

"You know what a Number Four *is*, hon?"

"No, but I'll eat it."

Elvira thinks this is a scream but writes it down without laughing. "Four and a club," she says and moves on.

"So he's got this deal," says Del, getting back to the story.

"Right. He's got this deal where he brings these tapes down to San Miguel de los Nachos, whatever it was, and this guy who runs a brand-new resort down there is gonna give us the royal-carpet treatment in exchange—"

"Like cassette tapes?"

"Fresh from the K mart. Why they can't go to their own stores and buy these things I don't know—what's the story down there, Lourdes?"

"It's a mystery to me," I say.

"Anyhow, we got thousands of the things we're bringing through without paying duty, a junior version of the scam he finally went up for, only I don't know because they're under the back seat and he keeps laying this Honeymoon Heaven jazz on me."

"With Richard his deals always have to do with clothes," says Del. "Man come in and say, 'Sugar, what size dress you wear?' and my stomach just hits the *floor*."

"And he brings the wrong size, right?"

"Ever damn time." Del shakes her head. "We took our honeymoon in Jamaica, back when we was livin high. Girl, you never saw nobody with more fluff in her head than me back then."

"You were young."

"Young ain't no excuse for *stupid*. I had one of those posters in my head—soft sand, violins playing, rum and Coke on ice and I was the girl in the white bikini. I thought it was gonna be like that *always*." Del gets kind of distant then, thinking back. She smiles. "Richard gets outa there, gets his health back, we gonna *party*, girl. That's one thing the man knows how to do is party."

"Yeah, Lonnie too. They both get clear we should all get together sometime, do the town."

As soon as it's out Lee knows different. There's a silence then, both of them just smiling, uncomfortable. Guys inside, black and white, aren't likely to even know who each other is, much less get together outside and make friendly. It does that to you, inside. Yayo is the same, always on about *los gachos gavachos* this and *los pinches negros* that, it's a sickness you pick up there. Or maybe you already got it when you go in and the joint makes it worse. Lee finally breaks the silence.

"I bet you look great in a white bikini," she says.

Del laughs. "That's the *last* time I been to any *beach*, girl."

Cheryl shows with the food and Mrs. Tucker excuses herself to go to the ladies'. Lee has the diet plate, a scoop of cottage cheese with a cherry on top, Del has a BLT with mayo on the side, and Pam has the Number Four, which at the Halfway is a Monte Cristo—ham and cheese battered in egg, deep fried, and then rolled in confectioner's sugar. She turns it around and around on her plate, studying it like it fell from Mars.

"I think maybe I'll ask him this visit," says Del. "About the kids."

"You'd be a good mother," says Lee.

"You think so?"

"Sure."

"Richard with a baby in his lap . . ." Del grimaces at the thought. "Sometimes I think it's just what he needs—responsibility, family roots, that whole bit, settle him down. Then I think how maybe he'll just feel more *pressure*, you know? And when he starts feelin pressure is when he starts messin up." Del lets the thought sit for a minute and then gives herself a little slap on the cheek as if to clear it away. "Just got to get him healthy first. Plenty of time for the rest." She turns to Pam. "So how's that Number Four?"

"It's different," says Pam. She's still working on her first bite, scared to swallow.

"You can't finish it," says Lee, "I might take a bite."

Del digs her in the ribs. "Girl, don't you even *look* at that Number Four. Thing is just *evil* with carbohydrates. I don't

wanta be hearing you bellyache about how you got no will-power all the way home."

"I got willpower," Lee says. "I'm a goddamn tower of strength. It's just my *appetite* is stronger—"

"Naw—"

"My appetite is like Godzi/la, Del, you seen it at work, layin waste to everything in its path—"

"Hah-*haaah!*"

"But I'm gonna whup it—"

"That's what I like to hear."

"Kick its butt—"

"Tell it, baby—"

"I'm losin twenty pounds—"

"Go for it!"

"An I'm quittin smoking too—"

"You can do it, Lee—"

"And when that man makes parole he's gonna buy me a dishwasher!"

"Get *down!*"

They're both of them giggling then, but Lee is mostly serious. "You know," she says, "as much as I want him out, sometimes it feels weird that it might really happen. You get used to being on your own, get your own way of doing things—"

"I hear you talkin—"

"The trouble is, it ain't so bad that I'm gonna leave him but it ain't so good I'm dying to stay."

There's hardly a one of us on the bus hasn't said the exact same thing at one time or another. Del looks around the room.

"So here we all are," she says, "at the Halfway Diner."

BACK ON THE ROAD PAM GETS QUIET SO I COUNT DEAD rabbits for a while, and then occupy the time imagining disasters that could be happening with the kids at Graciela's. You'd be surprised at how entertaining this can be. By the time we pass the fruit stand Chuy has left the burners going on the gas stove and Luz, my baby, is being chewed by a rabid Doberman. It's only twenty minutes to the facility after the fruit stand and you can hear the bus get quieter, everybody but Dolores. She's still muttering her good-bye speech like a rosary. The visits do remind me of confession—you go into a little booth, you face each other through a window, you feel weird afterward. I think about the things I don't want to forget to tell Yayo. Then I see myself in Renee's mirror and hit on her for some blush.

THE FIRST WE KNOW OF IT IS WHEN THE GUARD AT security calls Lee and Del's names and they're taken off in opposite directions. That sets everybody buzzing. Pam is real nervous, this being her first visit, and I think she is a little afraid of who her guy is going to be all of a sudden. I tell her not to ask too much of it, one visit. I can't remember me and Yayo just sitting and talking

a whole hour that many times *before* he went up. Add to that the glass and the little speaker boxes and people around with rifles, and you have definitely entered Weird City. We always talk home-talk cause all the guards are Anglos and it's fun for Yayo to badmouth them under their noses.

"Big blowout last night in the mess," he says to me. "*Anglos contra los negros*. One guy got cut pretty bad."

I get a sick feeling in the pit of my stomach. The night Yayo got busted I had the same feeling but couldn't think of anything to keep him in the house. "Black or white?" I ask.

"A black dude got stabbed," he says. "This guy Richard. He was a musician outside."

"And the guy who cut him?" I say, although I already know without asking.

"This guy Lonnie, was real close to parole. Got him up in solitary now. *Totalmente jodido*."

It was just something that kind of blew up and got out of control. Somebody needs to feel like he's big dick by ranking somebody else in front of the others and when you got black and white inside that's a fight, maybe a riot, and this time when the dust clears there's Lee's guy with his shank stuck in Del's guy. You don't ask it to make a lot of sense. I tell Yayo how the kids are doing and how they miss him a lot but I feel this weight pulling down on me, knowing about Lee and Del, I feel like nothing's any use and we're wasting our time squawking at each other over these microphones. We're out of rhythm, it's a long hour.

"I think about you all the time," he says as the guard steps in and I step out.

"Me too," I say.

It isn't true. Whole days go by when I hardly give him a thought, and when I do it's more an idea of him than really him in the flesh. Sometimes I feel guilty about this, but what the hell. Things weren't always so great when we were together. So maybe it's like the food at the Halfway, better to look forward to than to have.

Then I see how small he looks going back inside between the guards and I love him so much that I start to shake.

THE BUS IS ONE BIG WHISPER WHEN I GET BACK ON. The ones who have heard about Lee and Del are filling in the ones who haven't. Lee gets in first, pale and stiff, and sits by me. If I touched her with my finger she'd explode. Pam steps in then, looking shaky, and I can tell she's disappointed to see I'm already by someone. When Del gets on everybody clams up. She walks in with her head up, trying not to cry. If it had been somebody else cut her guy, somebody not connected with any of us on the bus, we'd all be around bucking her up and Lee would be first in line. As it is a couple of the black girls say something but she just zombies past them and sits in the very back next to Pam.

It's always quieter on the way home. We got things that were said to chew over, mistakes to regret, the prospect of another week alone to face. But after Del comes in it's like a morgue. Mrs. Tucker doesn't even knit, just stares out at the Valley going by kind of blank-eyed and sleepy. Only Pam, still in the dark about what went down inside, starts to talk. It's so quiet I can hear her all the way from the rear.

"I never thought about how they'd have those guns," she says, just opening up out of the blue to Del. "I never saw one up close, only in the movies or TV. They're *real*, you know? They look so heavy and like if they shot it would just take you *apart*—"

"White girl," says Del, interrupting, "I don't want to be hearin' bout none of your problems."

After that all you hear is the gears shifting now and then. I feel sick, worse than when I try to read. Lee hardly blinks beside me, the muscles in her jaw working as she grinds something out in her head. It's hard to breathe.

I look around and see that the white girls are almost all up front but for Pam who doesn't know and the black girls are all in the back, with us Chicanas on the borderline between as usual. Everybody is just stewing in her own thoughts. Even the sisters have nothing to say to each other. A busload of losers slogging down the highway. If there's life in hell this is what the field trips are like. It starts to get dark. In front of me, while there is still a tiny bit of daylight, Renee stares at her naked face in her mirror and sighs.



ELVIRA AND CHERYL LOOK TIRED WHEN WE GET TO the Halfway. Ketchup bottles are turned on their heads on the counter but nothing is sliding down. Gus picks up on the mood and doesn't tell us how we got a clock to watch when he comes in.

Pam sits by me with Dolores and Mrs. Tucker on the other side. Dolores sits shaking her head. "Next time," she keeps saying. "I'll tell him next time." Lee shuts herself in the phone booth and Del sits at the far end of the counter.

Pam whispers to me, "What's up?"

"Big fight in the mess last night," I tell her. "Lee's guy cut Delphine's."

"My God. Is he okay?"

"He's alive if that's what you mean. I've heard Del say how he's got this blood problem, some old drug thing, so this ain't gonna help any."

Pam looks at the booth. "Lee must feel awful."

"Her guy just wrecked his parole but good," I say. "She's gettin it with both barrels."

Elvira comes by taking orders. "Rough trip, from the look of you all. Get your appetite back, Mrs. Tucker?"

"Yes, I have," she says. Her voice sounds like it's coming from the next room. "I'm very, very hungry."

"I didn't tell him," Dolores confesses to no one in particular. "I didn't have the heart."

We order and Elvira goes back in the kitchen. We know there is a cook named Phil but we have never seen him.

I ask Pam how her guy is making out. She makes a face, thinking. I can see her in high school, Pam, blonde and popular, and her guy, a good-looking charmer up to monkey business. An Anglo version of Yayo, full of promises that turn into excuses.

"He's okay, I guess. He says he's going to do his own time, whatever that means."

I got to laugh. "They all say that, honey, but not many manage. It means like mind your own business, stay out of complications."

"Oh."

Delphine is looking bullets over at Lee in the phone booth, who must be calling either her kids or her lawyer.

"Maybe that's how you got to be to survive in there," I say. "Hell, maybe out here, too. Personally I think it bites." Mrs. Tucker puts her head down into her arms and closes her eyes. It's been a long day. "The thing is," I say to Pam, "we're all of us doing time."

Lee comes out of the booth and goes to the opposite end of the counter from Del. It makes me think of me and Graciela. We used to be real jealous, her and me, sniff each other like dogs whenever we met, on account of her being Yayo's first wife. Not that I stole him or anything, they were bust long before I made the scene, but still you got to wonder what's he see in this bitch that I don't have? A natural human reaction. Anyhow, she's in the neighborhood and she's got a daughter by him who's ahead of my Chuy at the same school and I see her around but it's very icy. Then Yayo gets sent up and one day I'm stuck for a baby-

sitter on visiting day. I don't know what possesses me, but desperation being the mother of a whole lot of stuff I ask Graciela. She says why not. When I get back it's late and I'm wasted and we get talking and I don't know why but we really hit it off. She's got a different perspective on Yayo of course, talks about him like he's her little boy gone astray which maybe in some ways he is, and we never get into sex stuff about him. But he isn't the only thing we got in common. Yayo, of course, thinks that's all we do, sit and gang up on him verbally, and he's not too crazy about the idea. We started shopping together and sometimes her girl comes over to play or we'll dump the kids with my mother and go out and it's fun, sort of like high school where you hung around not necessarily looking for boys. We go to the mall, whatever. There's times I would've gone right under without her, I mean I'd be *gonzo* today. I look at Lee and Del, sitting tight and mean inside themselves, and I think that's me and Graciela in reverse. And I wonder what happens to us when Yayo gets out.

"Mrs. Tucker, can you hear me? Mrs. Tucker?"

It's Gus who notices that Mrs. Tucker doesn't look right. He's shaking her and calling her name, and her eyes are still open but all fuzzy, the life gone out of them. The sisters are chattering something about cold water and Cheryl drops a plate of something and Pam keeps yelling, "Where's the poster? Find the poster!" Later she tells me she meant the anti-choking poster they're supposed to have up in restaurants, which Elvira kind of hides behind the weight-telling machine cause she says it puts people off their feed. Mrs. Tucker isn't choking, of course, but Pam doesn't know this at the time and is sure we got to look at this poster before we do anything wrong. Me, even with all the disasters I've imagined for the kids and all the rescues I've dreamed about performing, I've never dealt with this particular glassy-eyed-older-lady type of thing so I'm no help. Gus is holding Mrs. Tucker's face in his hands, her body gone limp, when Lee and Del step in.

"Move back!" says Lee. "Give her room to breathe."

"You got a pulse?" says Del.

"Not much. It's fluttering around."

"Get an ambulance here," says Del to Elvira and Elvira sends Cheryl running to the back.

"Any tags on her?"

They look around Mrs. Tucker's neck but don't find anything.

"Anybody ever hear her talk about a medical problem?" asks Del to the rest of us, while she holds Mrs. Tucker's lids up and looks deep into her eyes.

We rack our brains but come up empty, except for Gus. Gus looks a worse color than Mrs. Tucker does, sweat running down his face from the excitement. "She said the doctor told her to watch her intake," he says. "Whatever that means."

"She didn't eat lunch," says Elvira. "You should never skip lunch."

Lee and Del look at each other. "She got sugar, maybe?"

"Or something like it."

"Some orange juice," says Lee to Elvira and she runs off. Mrs. Tucker is kind of gray now, and her head keeps flopping if they don't hold it up.

"Usually she talks my ear off," says Gus. "Today she was like depressed or something."

Elvira comes back out. "I brung the fresh-squeeze from the fridge," she says. "More vitamins."

Del takes it and feeds a little to Mrs. Tucker, tipping her head back to get it in. We're all of us circled around watching, opening our mouths in sympathy like when you're trying to get the baby to spoon-feed. Some dribbles out and some stays down.

"Just a little," says Lee. "It could be the opposite."

Mrs. Tucker takes another sip and smiles dreamily. "I like juice," she says.

"Here, take a little more."

That's good," she says in this tiny, little-girl voice. "Juice is good."

By the time the ambulance comes we have her lying down in one of the booths covered by the lap blanket the sisters bring, her head pillowed on a couple of bags full of hamburger rolls. Her eyes have come clear and eventually she rejoins the living, looking up at all of us staring down around her and giving a little smile.

"Everybody's here," she says in that strange, far-off voice. "Everybody's here at the Halfway Diner."

THE AMBULANCE GUYS TAKE SOME ADVICE FROM LEE and Del and then drive her away. Just keep her overnight for observation is all. "See?" Elvira keeps saying. "You don't never want to skip your lunch." Then she bags up dinners for those who want them cause we have to get back on the road.

Nobody says anything, but when we get aboard nobody will take a seat. Everybody just stands around in the aisle talking about Mrs. Tucker and waiting for Lee and Del to come in and make their move. Waiting and hoping, I guess.

Lee comes in and sits in the middle. Pam moves like she's gonna sit next to her but I grab her arm. Delphine comes in, looks around kind of casual, and then like it's just a coincidence she sits by Lee. The rest of us settle in real quick then, pretending it's business as usual but listening real hard.

We're right behind them, me and Pam. They're not talking, not looking at each other, just sitting there side by side. Being nurses together might've cracked the ice but it didn't break it all the way through. We're parked right beneath the Halfway Diner sign and the neon makes this sound, this high-pitched buzzing that's like something about to explode.

"Sweet dreams, ladies," says Gus when he climbs into his seat. "We're bringin it home."

It's dark as pitch and it's quiet, but nobody is having sweet dreams. We're all listening. I don't really know how to explain this, and like I said, we're not exactly the

League of Women Voters on that bus but there's a spirit, a way we root for each other and somehow we feel that the way it comes out between Lee and Delphine will be a judgment on us all. Nothing spoken, just a feeling between us.

Fifty miles go past and my stomach is starting to worry. Then, when Del finally speaks, her voice is so quiet I can hardly hear one seat away.

"So," she says. "San Luis Abysmal."

"Huh?" says Lee.

"Mexico," says Delphine, still real quiet. "You were telling me about your honeymoon down in San Luis Abysmal."

"Yeah," says Lee. "San Something-or-other—"

"And he says he speaks the language—"

You can feel this sigh like go through the whole bus. Most can't hear the words but just that they're talking. You can pick up the tone.

"Right," says Lee. "Only he learned his Spanish at Taco Bell. He's got this *deal*, right—"

"*Finalmente*," one of the sisters whispers behind me.

"*¡Qué bueno!*" the other whispers. "*Todavía son amigas.*"

". . . so we get to the so-called resort and he cuts open the back seat and all these cassettes fall out, which I know nothing about—"

"Course not—"

"Only on account of the heat they've like *liquified*, right—"

"*Naw—*"

"And this guy who runs the resort is roped off but so are we cause this so-called brand-new resort is so brand-new it's not *built* yet—"

"Don't *say* it, girl—"

"It's just a *construction* site—"

"*Hah-haaa!*"

The bus kicks into a higher gear and out of nowhere Gus is whistling up front. He's never done this before, not once, probably because he had Mrs. Tucker talking with him, but he's real good, like somebody on a record. What he's whistling is like the theme song to some big romantic movie, I forget which, real high and pretty and I close my eyes and get that nice feeling like just before you fall to sleep and you know everything is under control and your body just relaxes. I feel good knowing there's hours before we got to get off, feel like as long as we stay on the bus, rocking gentle through the night, we're okay, we're safe. The others are talking soft around me now, Gus is whistling high and pretty, and there's Del and Lee, voices in the dark.

"There's a beach," says Lee, "only they haven't brought in the *sand* yet and everywhere you go these little fleas are hoppin around and my ankles get bit and swole up like a balloon—"

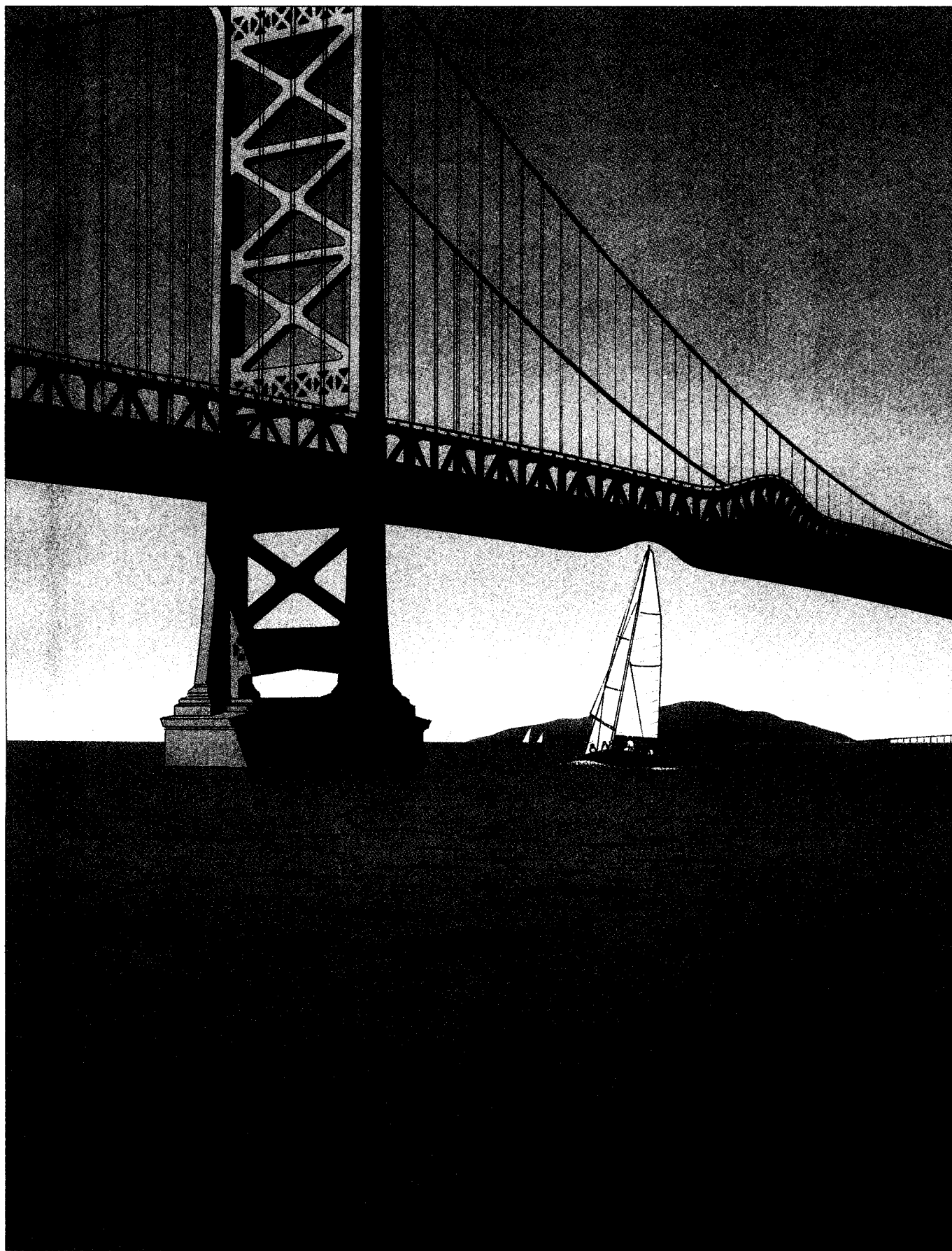
"I been there, girl," says Del. "I hear you talkin—"

"Honeymoon Heaven, he says to me—"

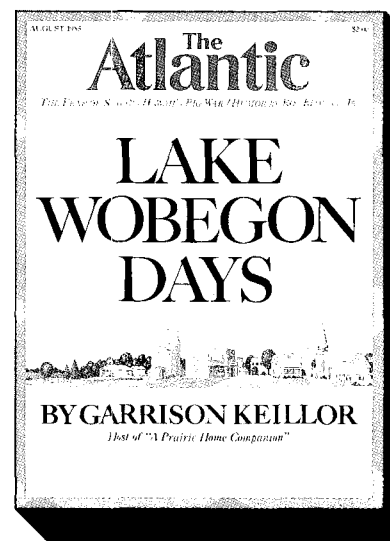
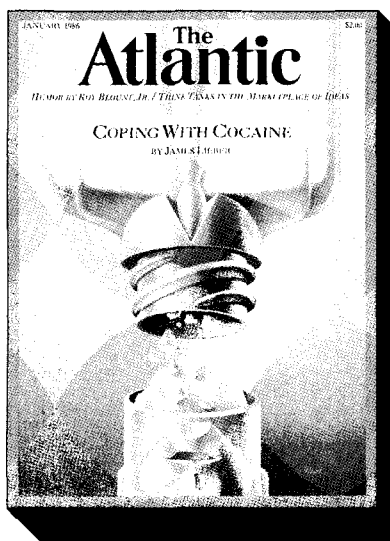
Del laughs, softly. "Honeymoon *Heaven*." □

PASSAGE

BY GUY BILLOUT



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FOOD

COOKIES AND WINE

Biscotti di Prato and Vin Santo were made for each other

BY CORBY KUMMER

I WAS ALREADY cookie crazy when, one night in Florence, someone passed me a bowl of rough, stubby almond biscuits that everyone was dipping into glasses of the sweet wine Vin Santo. When I bit into one, it broke as if along fault lines, leaving small pieces studded with toasted almonds. The dough itself was sweet but not too sweet (the wine would add sugar) and slightly salty; even when dipped into wine the hard biscuit remained wonderfully crunchy. I knew I had discovered the king of cookies.

Biscotti di Prato symbolize Tuscany all over Italy, and they are popular everywhere in a country that is not famously partial to desserts. In fact, the cookies often inspire fanatic devotion in visitors who taste them, even those who are otherwise indifferent to sweets. I have pursued biscotti di Prato all through Florence and across Tuscany, and have collected stories of other people similarly obsessed. I even made a pilgrimage to the source—the city of Prato, fifteen miles from Florence, which has had a proud mercantile history since medieval times (it is still one of the leading wool producers in Italy) and has been known for its cookies since, it is said, the fourteenth century.

A renowned bakery in the middle of town, named for its founder, Antonio Mattei, makes biscotti di Prato and other Tuscan specialties, including *brutti ma buoni* (“ugly but good”), which are meringue cookies with ground almonds. The *brutti ma buoni* at Mattei are the size of tennis balls and induce sugar shock. The biscotti di Prato are long and thin, and good enough to want to copy. I was warned about the cantankerous proprietor, one Signor Pandolfini, who would not only be secretive but might forbid me to buy more than one kilogram of biscotti, claiming short supply but really fearing attempts at resale (Mattei’s cookies are sold only in Prato, at the bakery) or duplication.

I thought I was making great progress when Pandolfini allowed me to buy four

kilograms of biscotti. While a young woman packed them in shiny turquoise bags with gold lettering, I made conversation about how long I had wanted to come to this bakery and how much I loved biscotti di Prato. In fact, I said, I was especially eager to learn to make them right. At this opening Pandolfini for the first time allowed himself a faint smile. “Making biscotti di Prato is *molto complicato*,” he said, and handed me my package of cookies.

To my surprise, I recently found an American bakery, La Tempesta, that makes biscotti di Prato so good that they have become my favorite. The owner is Bonnie Tempesta, a young woman who lives and works near San Francisco but whose bloodlines are pure Tuscan. Tempesta’s bakery is a smallish one, in an industrial area of South San Francisco. Her mother works there full-time and her father sometimes helps pack cookies (a difficult task, since so many break; Tempesta uses plastic-bubble wrap). Her basic recipe comes from an aunt, and Tempesta has toured Tuscany herself to perfect her biscotti. She has stretched the length of her biscotti to seven inches from the traditional two or

three, and she cuts them thinner. They break gratifyingly in the mouth and are perfect for dipping in Vin Santo or (a desecration, purists say) coffee. She now makes hazelnut biscotti and sells both the almond and hazelnut versions coated with chocolate—an unthinkable adulteration in Tuscany but a very popular one in the fancy-food stores that carry her biscotti.

When I visited Tempesta, she was both warm and self-possessed, showing me that everything she sells is still hand-made and describing how she went from traveling door-to-door in the Bay Area to winning prizes at national food shows. (If liquor labels can boast of gold medals awarded at Ghent in 1913, why can’t cookie boxes say with a flourish, “Best Product Award, 1985 Atlanta Fancy Food and Confection Show”?) She was very obliging about giving me broken pieces of all of the cookies she makes (if only biscotti di Prato were not deficient in certain essential vitamins, I could happily live on Tempesta’s broken pieces) but was understandably reluctant to share her recipe. I kept searching. The union of cookies and wine seemed a perfect one, and though I would never master viticulture I could at least master baking biscotti.

BISCOTTI DI PRATO are rarely served in Italy without Vin Santo, the most famous sweet wine in Tuscany and perhaps in all of Italy. Pouring a glass of it makes a visit into an occasion, and at dinner parties a bottle of Vin Santo and a plate of biscotti are usually produced, with some ceremony, about half an hour after coffee, when guests have settled



down for real conversation. Vin Santo has the same golden-brown color as sherry and is reminiscent of both sherry and port in its depth of flavor, smoothness, and sweetness. Unlike sherry and port, it is not fortified with extra alcohol. Tuscan Vin Santo ranges from off-dry to decidedly sweet, and most Umbrian Vin Santo is sweet. A dry Vin Santo makes an excellent aperitif, and it is often served as one, especially on a Sunday afternoon. But the sweetness of biscotti di Prato completes the flavor of Vin Santo, just as the velvety texture and sweetness of even a dry Vin Santo complete the flavor of the hard, half-sweet cookie.

Although Vin Santo is fairly easy to come by in both Italy and America, it is still accorded the respect due something that is scarce, expensive, and hard to make. (The name, which means "holy wine," has inspired various legends about Vin Santo's origins; it was certainly used as a liturgical wine in Tuscany.) In fact, the thirty or forty Tuscan and Umbrian vineyards that make Vin Santo using the original methods, rather than industrial ones, sell it at a loss, according to Burton Anderson, an American who lives in Tuscany and is the author of the comprehensive *Vino* and *Guide to Italian Wines*. Success is unpredictable and waste inevitable.

The grapes used are malvasia and trebbiano, varieties of which make up most of the white wine produced in Tuscany and Umbria. They are left to dry partially for three to five months, during which a third to a half of the juice, or "must," that they could yield evaporates. After the grapes are pressed, the must is left to ferment for at least three years in sealed oak barrels, which are usually placed near the ceiling of a cellar, where warmth will encourage fermentation. When made in a house—and nearly every family in Tuscany with even a tiny grape harvest makes Vin Santo—the barrel is placed in the attic, where the changes in weather will cause a stop-start fermentation that gives the wine depth. No other yeast or sugar is added; the wine may be sweet, if there is sugar left after the yeasts present in the grapes have had their fill, or dry, if the yeasts are very active. If the yeasts are insatiable, the barrels can hold disaster when unsealed. In his estimable *Italian Wine*, Victor Hazan, a master of prose style in food and wine writing, tells of a winemaker friend who never knows whether after three years he will taste

Vin Santo or "very expensive vinegar." If he tastes Vin Santo, he will have a wine that will last for twenty or even thirty years.

Many famous vineyards in Tuscany produce Vin Santo. Antinori, Badia a Coltibuono (which has shrewdly initiated joint promotions with La Tempesta), Frescobaldi, and Ricasoli are among the most readily available in American wine shops. Of the sweet Umbrian Vin Santos, the most widely distributed is Lungarotti. A typical price for a bottle is about \$15, which seems more than reasonable given Anderson's estimate that the production cost per bottle is \$10. When the label on a bottle of Vin Santo does not identify its region, the wine was probably made from the Sicilian moscato grape, which is less tricky to use and is guaranteed to be sweet but lacks the character of the best Vin Santo. Although the unusual fermentation of Vin Santo makes vintage a less important question than it is for other wines, Vin Santo does vary by year. One wine seller, for example, recommends the 1977 Badia a Coltibuono.

The sweetest and most distinguished of all is from the Tuscan vineyard Avignonesi, which has been marketing its rich, dark-amber Vin Santo in the United States for four years. The production is small—only 500 to 800 bottles a year—and the price now is about \$40 a half bottle. (Avignonesi is available at some wine shops and from Goldstar Wines & Spirits, in New York City; the number is 718-459-0200.) Avignonesi is as sweet as most dessert wines. When I was first served it, at La Casanova, a restaurant near the vineyard which is owned by wine sellers and connoisseurs, I asked for some biscotti di Prato. I received a stern look of reproof. "Dipping anything in this Vin Santo would be a sin," the waiter said.

AS IT HAPPENS, a number of professional cooks and bakers share my opinion of biscotti di Prato, and have been working on recipes of their own. Many fans directed me to a recipe for a similar cookie in Richard Sax's excellent *Old-Fashioned Desserts*. Though very good, it wasn't what I was after. I came quite close with the help of Nicholas Malgieri, a baking teacher at Peter Kump's New York Cooking School, whose book on pastry techniques will appear next spring; he is at work on a book of Italian desserts, which upon publication will assume a place of honor on my

shelf. Malgieri's biscotti were very like ones I had tried in Florence, but I was intent on the toasty, crunchy version Tempesta makes, and I finally achieved something enough like it that I am obliged to give each batch away the moment it has cooled, in order to avoid gluttony. The recipe is simplicity itself. Like most things that answer to that description, it required innumerable tries to perfect.

Begin by roasting one cup (five ounces) of whole, unblanched almonds in a 350° oven until lightly browned. This will take ten or fifteen minutes; start checking as soon as you can smell the almonds, because they burn easily. Set the nuts aside to cool completely. Lower the oven temperature to 300°, and butter and flour a cookie sheet. You will need another sheet for the second baking ("biscotti" means "twice cooked"), and if your cookie sheets are less than twelve inches wide and fifteen inches long, you will need another for the first baking, too.

The ingredients for the dough are appealingly even: two cups of unsifted flour, one cup of sugar, one level teaspoon of baking soda, a pinch of salt, three large eggs, and a half teaspoon of vanilla. The baking soda helps the cookies to become very brown and, with the long and slow baking, creates the porous and brittle texture I so admire in Tempesta's cookies. Making the dough by hand is sticky but requires no finesse. It is easiest to make the dough in an electric mixer that has a paddle attachment (the dough is too stiff for hand-held and conventional mixers with two beaters), and also very easy to make in a food processor.

If making the dough by hand, stir the dry ingredients in a bowl just to mix. Put aside half a cup of the flour mixture. In a small bowl or measuring cup lightly beat the eggs and vanilla. Make a well in the flour mixture and pour in the eggs. Stir in flour from the sides. When the mixture becomes too stiff to stir, turn out the globs of dough onto a surface floured with some of the dry ingredients you put aside. With floured hands fold the dough over itself until it coheres. You will need the rest of the dry ingredients to keep the dough from sticking to your hands and the work surface. Press the nuts into the dough and keep folding it over itself until they are evenly distributed. Let the dough sit for a few minutes so that the flour will absorb the liquid and make it less sticky.

If using a mixer, beat the egg-and-

vanilla mixture into the dry ingredients at the lowest setting. The dough should cohere after a messy minute. It will be heavy and sticky. Pour in the nuts in two additions, beating just until the nuts begin to break up. Turn the dough out onto a floured surface and fold it over itself three or four times to distribute the nuts. Then let it rest a minute or two.

In a food processor, mix the eggs and vanilla for five seconds. Stir together the dry ingredients in a separate bowl and add them to the processor bowl a half cup at a time, pulsing about five times after each addition—until the dough almost incorporates the flour. When all the dry ingredients are in, the dough will not yet be in a ball. Add the nuts by halves, pulsing five times after each addition. The dough will still not cohere, and the nuts will not be well distributed. Both problems are easily solved by turning the dough out onto a floured board and with well-floured hands folding it over itself a dozen or so times. Let the dough rest five minutes (the action of the processor can heat it, making it hard to work with).

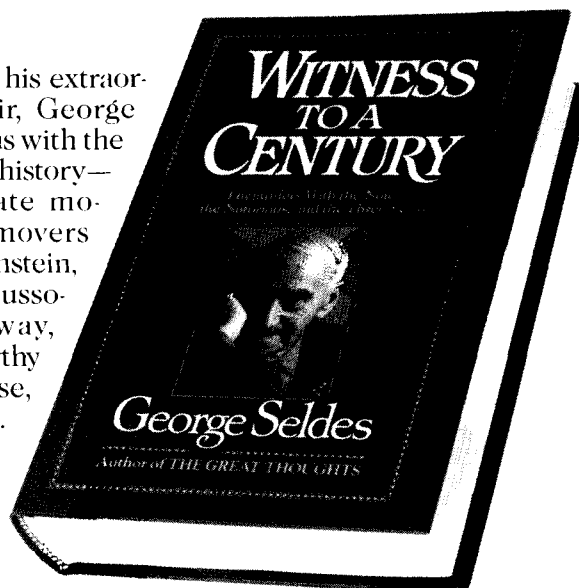
Divide the dough into three equal pieces. Rolling with your hands, elongate each piece into a strip about an inch wide and from twelve to fourteen inches long. When cut, these will produce about four dozen cookies about three inches long. For a more dramatic shape you can make two wider strips of the same length, which will produce two dozen cookies about six inches long. Place the strips on the baking sheet, leaving at least four inches between them if you have made three and six inches if you have made two. If you choose the wider strips, flatten them with your hands to a width of about two inches.

Bake them for 50 minutes at 300° (and no higher—if you fear that your oven is hotter than it says, as most ovens are, set it at 275°). Let them cool for five minutes. Remove the strips from the sheet with a spatula and transfer them to a cutting surface. Using a sharp knife and making decisive downward strokes, cut diagonal bars every half inch. Lay the cookies on their sides on the two baking sheets and put them back into the oven to toast for 35 to 50 minutes, depending on how dark you want them. Let them cool on a rack.

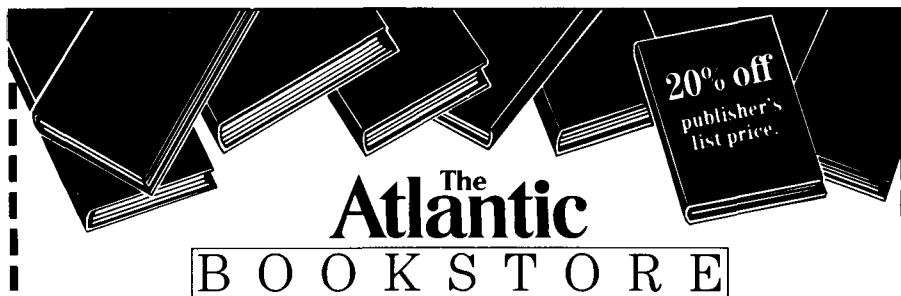
I am told that the cookies improve greatly after being stored in a paper bag for at least five or six days. I have yet to find a storage space sufficiently inaccessible to enable me to verify this. □

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MOVIES

TWIN CINEMA

The animated art of the Brothers Quay

BY TERENCE RAFFERTY

THEY BILL THEMSELVES as the Brothers Quay, which has an archaic and faintly ridiculous ring, as if they were a vaudeville comedy act or a family of acrobats. Photographs of Timothy and Stephen Quay, who are identical twins, look like trick shots from the early days of cinema, products of the cheap camera magic that makes a single actor double and allows him, before our eyes, to talk to himself. In interviews the comments of one brother are never distinguished from those of the other: they speak as if with one voice.

The Quays, born in Philadelphia, have lived and worked together for all of their forty years, most recently in London, where since 1978 they have absorbed themselves in the absurd and intricate form of play known as puppet animation—that naively mechanistic genre of film art that preserves, a frame at a time, the memories of a childish delight in small effigies of ourselves, our wonder when at a human touch the dolls begin to move, and our vague horror as we watch their manipulated forms reflect and parody the actions of our own bodies.

Puppet animation is, as the Quays themselves admit, a freakish, marginal art: it can be as trivial as the singing, dancing raisins of American television advertising, or as ponderously symbolic as some of the Eastern European political allegories that turn up with alarming frequency on film-festival programs. But the Quays' puppets seem, like the mysterious twins who make them, to have found in their own marginality an eerier and more suggestive kind of life, a shadowy, feverish half existence in which their movements are like the choreography of dreams. These puppets have the quality, unique in the genre, of appearing to be aware of their secondhand status, conscious that they're the crude doubles of beings once or still alive. And the films—with their sinuous camera movements through rooms full of dust and clutter and dirty glass, the interiors

of a playhouse decrepit from overuse—are informed by the philosophical melancholy of their creators, whose art is perhaps the product of an endless and unresolvable obsession, who make puppets perhaps because each of them has spent every day of his life looking at and talking to a moving, three-dimensional, terrifyingly exact copy of himself.

There is, of course, something fanciful about the notion that the Quays' art is a complex ritual of twinhood. It makes



This Unnameable Little Broom (1985)

the Quays out to be characters in a Romantic horror story—artists haunted by their creations, men looking over their shoulders for the doubles they know (or imagine) are following them, denizens of the unsettling mirror worlds of Hoffmann and Kafka, Poe and Borges. If we see them this way, it's because the films themselves encourage us to. Just as there are dreams so intense, so cryptic, that they hold our imagination for days, even years, the Quays' short movies have the power of the truly uncanny: we sense, without knowing why, that there's something *necessary* in their mas-

tery of this arcane craft, that they're not so much telling stories with puppets as they are searching for the human ghosts in their wood-and-cloth machines. The intimacy of the Quays' relation to their dolls is creepy. Watching these films, we feel like Hoffman characters ourselves, enchanted into an uneasy self-consciousness by arts so overwhelming that they verge on the demonic. We seem, somehow, to have been twinned—dancers mesmerized by the strange reflections of our own movements in the mirror beyond the barre.

THE METAPHYSICAL theater of the Brothers Quay—whose work until now has been visible only on British television, in European film festivals, and in a film series called *Alchemists of the Surreal*, which has toured English art cinemas since last fall—has taken its show on the road in the United States this year, on a characteristically small scale. In January the United States Film Festival in Utah showed a program of four Quay films: *Leoš Janáček: Intimate Excursions* (which runs for twenty-seven minutes), *The Cabinet of Jan Švankmajer* (fourteen minutes), *Little Songs of the Chief Officer of Hunar Louse, or This Unnameable Little Broom* (eleven minutes), and *Street of Crocodiles* (twenty minutes), their most recent film, and their first in 35mm. This same program has had a week's run at New York's Film Forum, and *Street of Crocodiles* has been screened at the San Francisco Film Festival. There's talk of taking the program on tour to other cities and of showing one or more of the films on public television, but nothing is definite. Right now these films are obscure, sneaking in and out of theaters furtively, which seems oddly appropriate: they're such unlikely objects, and flash past our eyes so quickly, that they leave us dazed, unsure whether we've really seen their images or merely hallucinated them.

Even at their most straightforward, as in the Janáček film, the Quays are disorienting. The brothers, along with their longtime collaborator, the producer Keith Griffiths, have often worked in the portrait-of-the-artist genre, partly because television is always eager to supply funds for such "educational" films: they've also done a biography of the Belgian playwright Michel de Ghelderode, which was mostly documentary, and the jazzy, hilarious puppet film *Igor—The Paris Years Chez Pleyel*, about Stravinsky, with Jean Cocteau (who at



Leoš Janáček: Intimate Excursions (1983)

one point appears in a tutu, dancing to a pianola score of *Petrushka*) and Vladimir Mayakovsky (whose body is an origami nightmare of revolutionary posters) hovering at the edges.

But the Quays' biographical films are like no one else's. In *Janáček*, as in the Stravinsky film, the artist-doll is a startlingly poignant composite—a puppet's three-dimensional body supporting a cutout photograph, slightly oversized, of the great man's head. This technique isn't simply a way of avoiding caricature. Janáček's head, monochromatic and 2-D, has the shocking gravity of many old photos: it's the visual equivalent of the ghostly scraps of the composer's diaries and correspondence that are read to us in voice-over. ("When someone speaks to me, I listen to the tonal modulations in their voice, more than to what they are actually saying. . . . I can feel or rather hear my hidden sorrow.") The tenuous relationship between head and body makes the Quays' Janáček seem, poetically, all mind, and as animated tableaux of the composer's work pass before us, we can't help feeling that we're seeing and hearing this music the way Janáček

must have dreamed it. This illusion, almost too fragile to sustain, derives its force and beauty from the rhythms of the Quays' camera, moving in mysterious concord with the stately tempos of the music itself. The camera circles the extraordinary sets—a forest of leafless trees, Janáček's bare room, a deserted gymnasium with grillwork windows, a prison, a ruined church—catching glimpses of spindly, insect-like puppet figures through the trees and the bars of windows, images as fugitive as those that appear and disappear, flickering in the mind's eye, as we listen to a piece of music. At Janáček's death all the phantoms of the composer's imagination—the frail puppets from his works, including *Diary of One Who Vanished*, *The Cunning Little Vixen*, and *The Makropulos Case*, among others—gather around him for a moment in the forest, which has moved, somehow, into his stark room, the trunks' dark vertical forms merging with the shadows of the windows' grills, echoing the cathedral's pillars and the prison's bars, filling the space around his fading features with a tangle of lines, like a passionately scribbled score. The

delicate calligraphy of a musician's mind has never been represented more beautifully.

The Cabinet of Jan Švankmajer and *This Unnameable Little Broom* (as its impossible title is usually abbreviated) are, though brilliant, perhaps the Quays' most difficult and off-putting films. These two shorts are harder-edged and less lyrical than the Janáček film, and depend more heavily on the Eastern European puppet-film tradition: there's a hint of didacticism in them, even though we're never quite sure what we're meant to be learning. The Švankmajer film is in fact a tribute to a Czech animator whose work has influenced the Quays. It's structured as a series of little lessons in perception, taught by a puppet with an open book for hair, to a doll with a hollowed-out head, in finely detailed settings that evoke the style of encyclopedia illustration (as well as, at various points, Ernst, de Chirico, and the Mannerist painter Arcimboldo). For the viewer, the movie is a short course in the principles of animation, conducted as if the art of Švankmajer and the Quays were a lost discipline of the Re-



KONINCK STUDIOS

Street of Crocodiles (1986)

naissance, an ancient form of anatomical drawing.

This Unnameable Little Broom, which is, according to the filmmakers, a portion of "a largely disguised reduction of the *Epic of Gilgamesh*," is a swift, savage, and largely baffling movie about a tricycle-riding monster who traps a strange winged creature in his lair. The camera whips back and forth in slashing, aggressive gestures, and the effect is stunning, but the battle is abrupt and not quite so satisfying. We have no context for what we're seeing—the film is actually a fragment, a single episode from a planned full version of *Gilgamesh*—so the whole encounter, inventively choreographed as it is, seems too starkly mythic.

But *Street of Crocodiles*, the Quays' very free adaptation of Bruno Schulz's dreamlike memoir of Poland between the wars, is a fully articulated vision. Schulz's hallucinatory prose, which renders the world as a fantastic construction whose laws seem always on the tantalizing verge of our understanding, is perfect for the Quays. Schulz writes, in the voice of his narrator's deranged father:

"Figures in a waxwork museum, . . . must not be treated lightly. . . . Can you imagine the pain, the dull imprisoned suffering, hewn into the matter of that dummy which does not know why it must be what it is, why it must remain in that forcibly imposed form which is no more than a parody? . . . You give a head of canvas and oakum an expression of anger and leave it with it, with the convulsion, the tension enclosed once and for all, with a blind fury for which there is no outlet. . . .

"Have you heard at night the terrible howling of these wax figures, shut in the fair-booths; the pitiful chorus of those forms of wood or porcelain, banging their fists against the walls of their prisons?"

The Quays, clearly, have heard these sounds. The puppet-hero of *Street of Crocodiles*—who, as we learn in a black-and-white live-action prologue, is part of an elaborate contraption locked away in a provincial museum—looks around him in something like terror when the thread connecting him to his unseen manipulator is snipped, and then, with a haunted, stricken stare, begins to explore. His environment is ominous, a decaying city

inside a box, with an inscrutable system of threads and pulleys running along the ground, screws that pull free of floorboards and dance in the dust, shop windows full of blank mannequins and mechanical monkeys beating their cymbals furiously when a light shines on them, and dolls rotating shoulders whose joints are disturbingly exposed. Everything in this world seems to hint at obscure connections—the screws' threads are somehow related to the wires from which the hero has been disengaged, and also to the filaments of the light bulbs in the shops—and everything is a reflection of the weathered materials of which this abandoned puppet is made. It's no wonder he looks anxious as he wanders timidly through this labyrinth of wood and glass, no wonder the camera seems to be skulking with him, moving carefully, as if afraid of what it will find around the next corner. The Quays' *Street of Crocodiles* is a puppet film that, in its self-consciousness, transcends itself. It's about the chill of discovering, through play, what we're made of—about gazing on an aging world and seeing our own fragile anatomies reflected there. □

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THE PATTERN OF GREATNESS

BY JOHN LEWIS GADDIS

GEORGE C. MARSHALL:
STATESMAN, 1945–1959
*by Forrest C. Pogue, with a foreword
by Drew Middleton.*
Viking, \$29.95.

FORTY YEARS AGO this month, Harvard University awarded an honorary degree to “a soldier and statesman whose ability and character brook only one comparison in the history of the nation.” The citation was laconic but sufficient: one did not need to explain in 1947 that the recipient was George Catlett Marshall, and that the comparison—accepted without question—was to George Washington.

Our generation has lost touch with Marshall and the qualities of his leadership that evoked this unique tribute. We remember him vaguely as Franklin D. Roosevelt’s Army Chief of Staff and, in that capacity, as the man most responsible for the success of U.S. military operations in the Second World War. We may recall that as Harry Truman’s Secretary of State, he originated—and announced on that day in Harvard Yard—the plan for European reconstruction that came to bear his name. We may know that as Secretary of Defense during the Korean War, he helped to sustain the principle of civilian supremacy over the military in the face of the challenge posed to it by his old, totally dissimilar comrade-in-arms, Douglas MacArthur.

But it puzzles us when we see survivors from Marshall’s generation respond to an invocation of his memory, or even to the mention of his name. Eyes fix themselves firmly on distant horizons. Chins are held higher, shoulders are squared. *Respect*—even among those accustomed to receiving it themselves—is written across faces. And one suddenly realizes that no other American official in this century has made a greater impact upon contemporaries through sheer force of character alone than General George C. Marshall.

With the appearance of this volume Forrest C. Pogue completes a project begun more than three decades ago, when the aging General agreed, with the characteristic condition that he play no role in the selection, to the appointment of an “official” biographer. Pogue interviewed Marshall prior to the General’s death, in 1959; he also had access, as director of the George C. Marshall Library, in Lexington, Virginia, to his subject’s personal papers. Three volumes, previously published, have chronicled Marshall’s military career through the end of the Second World War; this one covers what was supposed to have been his retirement. His actual retirement was delayed from 1945 until 1951, when, having served as President Truman’s mediator in the Chinese civil war, Secretary of State, president of the American Red Cross, and Secretary of Defense, the General was at last able to devote himself entirely to his wife, his house in Virginia, and his long-neglected vegetable garden. (What would the General most like as a welcome-home gift, a neighbor asked during an earlier, brief break in Marshall’s official

responsibilities. One or two loads of manure, Mrs. Marshall—who knew the General’s priorities—quite accurately responded.)

Given Pogue’s close association with his subject, it is not surprising that his biography takes on some of the characteristics of Marshall himself. It is thorough, conscientious, balanced, but also self-effacing. The prose is clear but, as Marshall’s speeches tended to be, a bit flat. One finishes it satisfied that one knows what one should about the General’s career, but the qualities that caused contemporaries to hold him in such high regard remain elusive. Marshall would have wanted it that way: no one in public life resisted more strenuously his own commemoration. But Pogue’s readers may wish for a more explicit discussion than he provides—at least of Marshall’s approach to leadership, given the leadership vacuum that recent events have revealed.

“*QUIS CUSTODIET ipsos custodes?*” the Tower Commission asked, in examining the Reagan Administration’s mismanagement of the Iran-contra affair. “Who will guard the guardians themselves?” Marshall would have thought the question odd, because his approach to public service stressed the duty of those entrusted with official responsibility to maintain *within themselves* appropriate standards of behavior, and not to depend on their external imposition. Those standards were, for Marshall, very clear:

First, and above all else, an unwavering commitment to democracy—which not all professional military officers have shared. Marshall accepted without ques-

tion the Constitution's subordination of both military operations and national security policy to civilian control, as well as—and equally important—the requirement that the executive and the legislative branch of government share in this control. He recognized with great clarity the fact that democracy imposes special conditions upon the conduct of war and diplomacy: the war or the policy has to be capable of commanding public and congressional support; it has to be carried out with maximum efficiency, which is to say, with the minimum expenditure of resources, human and otherwise, required to do the job; it cannot depart too far from values for which the country stands. Characteristically Marshall advocated universal military training—without success, as it turned out—not because he was a militarist but because of his unabashed faith in democratic principles.

Second, the supremacy of national over personal interest. Marshall viewed government service as an end in itself, not as a platform from which to launch more pleasurable or profitable pursuits. He was capable of abandoning plans for retirement instantly—and without consulting Mrs. Marshall, to her chagrin—upon receipt of a single presidential phone call. He adamantly resisted political ambitions and affiliations, to the point of refusing throughout his life to vote. He rejected opportunities, once retirement did come, to take well-paid but comfortably undemanding corporate positions. He repeatedly turned down six- and seven-figure contracts to write his memoirs: he had not, he commented, spent a life serving the government in order to sell his story to *The Saturday Evening Post*.

Third, the ability to delegate authority. Marshall's management style resembled that of President Reagan, but with one critical difference: the General made it his business to know the character of those he entrusted with responsibility before doing so. Marshall's "black book," which recorded such judgments, was famous during the Second World War: men like Dwight Eisenhower, Omar Bradley, and Matthew B. Ridgway rose to prominence because of it. After the war Marshall singled out civilians like Dean Acheson, Robert A. Lovett, and George Kennan for influential positions. Having done so, he had the good sense to leave them alone and await their recommendations. (His sole instruction to Kennan on forming a plan-

ning staff—"Avoid trivia"—has become legendary.) He detected with unerring instinct subordinates with a penchant for self-promotion: they did not prosper under him.

Fourth, the acceptance of responsibility. Having delegated authority, Marshall backed to the hilt those he had put in charge, even if the outcome was not all he had hoped for. When the Russians in 1948 torpedoed—by publicizing—what was supposed to have been a behind-the-scenes test of their willingness to negotiate, Marshall refused to listen to apologies from his staff. The Secretary of State and the President had approved the initiative, he told a contrite Kennan, and that was that: "The only trouble with you is that you don't have the wisdom and the perspicacity of a columnist." Asked in a 1950 congressional hearing why he had joined in suppressing General Albert Wedemeyer's report on the situation in China three years earlier, Marshall replied: "I did not join in the suppression of the report. I personally suppressed it."

Fifth, the combination of dignity and humility. Marshall understood very well the uses of formality and distance for those in command, yet few men have inspired such lasting affection among those with whom they have worked. He did not cheapen praise by extending it frequently, but when it came, it carried weight. Impatient with the trappings of authority, he could be refreshingly unpretentious. When attending United Nations meetings, he refused to live, as most other diplomats did, at the Waldorf-Astoria. Delegates from other countries would be seeking loans, he pointed out, and it would help keep costs down if they saw him living more simply than they were. When one of his aides—without permission—sent a bodyguard to accompany him on a trip to Princeton, the Secretary of State curtly ordered: "Have this stopped. I'd rather be murdered than embarrassed to death." (On at least one occasion after this—an overseas trip—members of his own staff, worried about security, took turns standing guard overnight outside his hotel room without his knowledge.) It was Marshall's habit in retirement regularly to attend Rotary Club meetings and to listen patiently in the small town of Pinehurst, North Carolina, while guest speakers held forth, with understandable nervousness, on issues of military strategy and foreign policy.

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MARSHALL'S STANDARDS COME across today as a bit quaint. That is because we find them unfamiliar: we do not frequently encounter them these days in either corporate or political circles. It is worth noting, though, that four decades after Harvard embarrassed Marshall by comparing him to George Washington, it has rendered him yet another distinction: two professors at the John F. Kennedy School of Government, Richard Neustadt and Ernest May, have singled out his management style as one that current decision-makers ought to emulate. Their recent book, *Thinking in Time*, argues that Marshall was unusually skilled at using historical experience to make informed judgments about present and future events.

But the Reagan Administration's difficulties elicit an even broader appreciation of Marshall's standards: we have seen contempt for constitutional checks and balances, the equation of self-interest with national interest, the delegation of authority to those not qualified to wield it, a reluctance to assume responsibility for the results, and, it seems not unfair to say, pride without dignity. The General—or someone like him—could have helped. Philip Ziegler, while writing his biography of Lord Mountbatten, found himself so exasperated by the monumental egocentrism of his subject that he placed a note on his desk: REMEMBER, IN SPITE OF EVERYTHING, HE WAS A GREAT MAN. It is not likely that Pogue required any comparable admonition in writing his life of Marshall.

The ingredients of greatness are not easily defined. We are not always certain of our ability to recognize that quality when we encounter it: reputations rise and fall, and the judgment of contemporaries is not always that of posterity.

Marshall was one of those rare persons about whom this problem did not arise. Those who knew him acknowledged his greatness with remarkable unanimity; historians with unusual agreement have sustained that judgment. Revisionism has not flourished with regard to the General. Pogue's now complete biography never specifies precisely why Marshall was a Great Man; it was wise of Pogue not to try to do so. But these distinguished volumes do make it possible for new generations to acquaint themselves with the General's example, and to draw from it such conclusions about the nature of greatness as they may find appropriate. They are apt to draw quite a few. □

A MAJOR DISCOVERY

BY IRVING HOWE

THE FAMILY MASHBER

by Der Nister; translated by Leonard Wolf.
Summit Books, \$22.95.

"HERE ONE HAS to turn one's soul upside down"—so, in 1935, wrote a Yiddish writer in the Soviet Union to his brother in Paris. The writer, who went by the pen name of Der Nister (Yiddish for "The Hidden One"), had long been drawn to the mysteries and nuances of literary symbolism, making forays into esoteric knowledge that derived in part from cabalistic and Hasidic sources. But, as he told his brother, "what I have written until now aroused strong opposition [from the Communist literary bureaucrats]. . . . Symbolism has no place in Soviet Russia." Nor, in the years of Stalin's terror, did any other free-spirited literary approach.

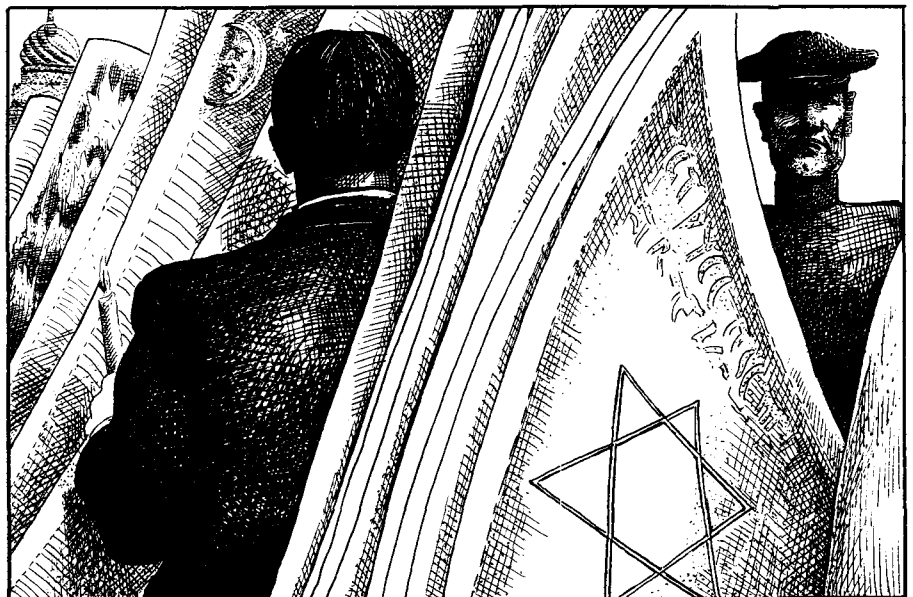
Der Nister, whose real name was Pinhas Kahanovitch (1884–1950), had come to be recognized in Yiddish cultural circles as part of a lively gathering of modern novelists and poets centered in Kiev a few years before the First World War. He was a man with an austere, if not always accessible, spiritual life, the kind of writer who could never make large noises or reach large audiences. He kept a skeptical distance from both the ideological debates within the Jewish milieu and, later on, the politics of the young Soviet regime. But by the mid-thirties—

when all writers in Russia, no matter what their language or style, felt the heavy hand of the commissars—Der Nister had decided to abandon (or perhaps hide?) his literary symbolism, if only to protect himself and his family. He started to compose a large-scale, seemingly traditional family chronicle, the sort of spacious and transparent novel that had been popular in Europe during the early years of this century.

The first volume of *The Family Mashber* appeared in Soviet Russia in 1939; the second could be published, nine years later, only in New York. Word filtered out from Soviet Russia that Der Nister left a third, concluding volume, but if so, it has disappeared. Perhaps it lies buried in the vaults of the Soviet secret police, together with a good many other works proscribed during the Stalin years.

As for Der Nister himself, his apolitical stance did not keep him from suffering the fate of so many others in the Soviet Union. He was arrested in 1950 during a sweep of Yiddish writers ordered by the half-crazed Stalin. Shortly thereafter he died in a prison hospital. At least he was spared the secret execution to which several of his Yiddish fellow writers were condemned in 1952.

Over the years a few attempts have been made to bring Der Nister's novel to an audience beyond the shrinking and aging Yiddish readership; the book has been translated into Hebrew and French, and now, because of the devoted skill of Leonard Wolf, we have a very readable English version, one that captures much of the range and color of the original text.



The Family Mashber hasn't a word directly referring to the situation of Yiddish writers in the Soviet Union, but for anyone familiar with the circumstances of its origin, it seems stained with the bloody marks of history. The book deals with Eastern European Jewish life in the 1870s, but as I read, images of the 1930s crossed my line of vision: censors brutalizing, writers suffering, prisoners shot. Critics, I suppose, must try to be dispassionate, and so I will offer a straight literary judgment: this is a work of major interest, gripping in its frequent pictorial brilliance, deeply serious in thought, yet finally elusive. It's a book to engage with and ponder over, even if it's not quite the masterpiece its translator takes it to be.

Der Nister locates the action of his novel in a moment when Eastern European Jewish life, no longer unified by a firm religious world view, is simultaneously falling apart and renewing itself. For the novelist, such a moment seems made to order. "The perfect literary situation," the poet-critic Allen Tate once wrote, is when "a spiritual community is breaking up." Such situations are rich in drama and consciousness: the interplay between tradition and rebellion, the crumbling old and the unshaped new. In the earlier years of this century novelists often grappled with this theme by focusing on a single family, making it the central field of tension, while behind it the larger community provided a shifting, precarious background. In turning to this kind of novel, Der Nister was following the lead of Yiddish writers who had begun edging their way into European literature by imitating those sprawling family chronicles through which European writers both mirrored and assaulted bourgeois values.

The Family Mashber is set in the western Ukrainian town of Berdichev, once under Polish rule and now with a growing Jewish population. Cultures meet and clash. In the distance is the Russian autocracy, powerful and feared; nearby, the Polish nobility, sulking after its defeat in the 1863 rebellion against czarism and, at least as Der Nister portrays it, slipping into paths of decadence. And in the foreground is the thickly populated Jewish community, now fragmented into an enfeebled orthodoxy, an ambitious commercial class, a seething underclass of laborers and toughs, and the germ of what will soon become the powerful movement of Jewish secularism. Writing with a curious detachment, as if this world were not the very source of

his being, Der Nister shows neither partisanship nor enmity. The calm, mildly ironic voice we hear throughout the book is that of a man surfeited with, perhaps nauseated by, historical experience.

Now, if we read *The Family Mashber* in a spirit of acquiescence, as we might read Thomas Mann's *Buddenbrooks* or I. J. Singer's *The Brothers Ashkenazi*—that is, as a sociohistorical panorama reflecting the crisis of a culture—the novel can be extremely satisfying. More so, probably, than if it is read in the way I propose. Plot, setting, characters, all seem to signal that this is essentially another family chronicle—all except the writer's voice as it keeps emerging in self-reflexive casuistries and ironies.

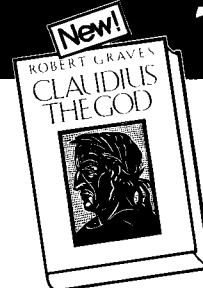
But let's turn to the story itself, following it along the path of the family chronicle. Moshe Mashber, an intelligent if rather limited merchant, finances the Polish nobles in their escapades, and when, through sheer fecklessness, they sink into hopeless debt, he sinks with them, into bankruptcy and then imprisonment. Moshe is a decent bourgeois, still somewhat attached to the old pieties but increasingly absorbed in the pursuit of gain.

Set off against Moshe is his brother, Luzi, "a man of interior disturbances," an imperious and aristocratic searcher for spiritual transcendence who becomes the local head of an extremist Hasidic sect, one that follows the call to ecstasy, contemplation, and otherworldliness of Nakhman of Bratslav, a great Hasidic teacher. Luzi's house becomes "a gathering point to which young people, whispering stealthily, came." I find myself wondering whether Der Nister's description of this religious sect is meant, however faintly, to invoke another sect, the kind that a few decades later would draw young people, "whispering stealthily," to the Luzis of Marxism. And there's the further note, gently struck by Der Nister, that in this sect of fundamentalist pietism there may be echoes of the false messianism of Sabbatai Zevi, which two centuries earlier had created havoc among European Jews.

Surrounding the Mashber brothers are the toughs and thugs, "enforcers" and arm-breakers, at the base of Jewish life, shown here sharply etched in their heaving brawn and mindless loyalty to rabbinic authority. These figures lend the novel a grittiness of texture that helps save it from sentimentalism, a besetting weakness of Yiddish fiction.

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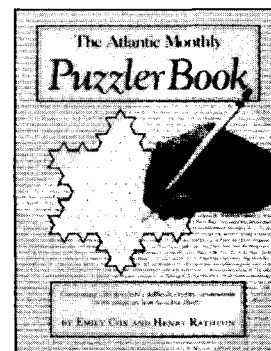
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a surly and enigmatic fellow named Sruli, at odds with every segment of the Jewish community yet also serving as a connective link between the segments. Sruli is the most interesting kind of fictional character, indisputably "there" but never fully accessible to our rational understanding. Sometimes he does good deeds, sometimes he sinks into moral degradation, and at the end, a self-appointed Sancho Panza, he joins Luzi on a journey of spiritual wandering. One follows this Sruli with puzzled fascination, and as far as I can make out, he represents the current of anarchic energy coursing through a community too long pent up by repressive rituals.

SO, IF WE WISH, we can certainly read with pleasure and absorption, contenting ourselves with the familiar patterns of the family chronicle and even concluding, with the inexpensive piety of the worldly, that Moshe Mashber's grubby materialism is trumped by Luzi's elevated spirituality. But it will not do: Der Nister is too serious, perhaps too sly, for this sort of stock response. When Moshe, on the edge of disaster, asks Luzi to help save his firm, Luzi turns coldly away, declaring a superior disdain for "mere" material concerns. Quester of spirit Luzi may be, but his brother's keeper he is not.

Something of the keenest literary interest is happening here: a mature writer who is not by nature or training a realistic novelist is writing a realistic novel, yet as it proceeds, the book turns and twists into something else, as if the writer's deeper, "better" nature cannot fully be suppressed. The book breaks into a number of panels of representation: the clashes between the brothers Mashber, the journeys of Sruli into the town's lower depths, the frenetic rituals of the Hasidic sect. There occurs a tensing of rhythms, with Der Nister's calm giving way to prose that approaches the vibrations of expressionism and scenes that take on a grotesque cast. Especially vivid are those scenes devoted to Luzi's sect (with the stately Luzi dancing himself into abandonment, as if he were "a winged creature waking at sunrise who, in sheer joy . . . , flung himself off into space").

Der Nister's struggle with the novel as a form has a certain similarity to Boris Pasternak's struggle in *Doctor Zhivago*. Gifted writers inclined by training and temperament to nonrealistic genres can find themselves driven by historical

pressures to undertake straight realism. The risks are large, and surely, as they enter the treacherous precincts of the novel, they know it. Neither Pasternak nor Der Nister quite mastered the art of narrative movement, that blessing of craft by which a novelist creates the illusion that depicted events are progressing through time. These writers are masters of the "still," the grotesque episode and lyrical moment; yet the paradox of their creativity is that it's precisely through their "inexpertness" with the novel that, in *Doctor Zhivago* and *The Family Mashber*, they best realize their talents.

What, finally, can one say about the implied significance, the thematic intentions, of Der Nister's book? Nothing with any certainty, for we don't have the third volume, which might bring everything into a coherent scheme of symbolism. But as I read the book, it does bear

the marks of the historical moment in which it was written. Listening to this writer from a lost time, a wretched place, I hear a weary skepticism about all claims to a unified grasp of the world, all modes of moral or ideological single-mindedness.

The Mashber brothers go their separate ways, and no doubt there's something to be said for each of them: the decency of ordinary aims, the exaltation of spiritual quest. But each also has major flaws: the moral carelessness of the worldly, the zealot's ruthlessness in imposing joy. And there seems no way of blending or linking these two ways of life. The disunities of our age are beyond repair, and they cannot be removed by either will or program. Or so I tentatively conclude, as one Mashber brother is lowered into the earth and the other grasps for ways to rise above it. □

BRIEF REVIEWS



THE "IT" GIRLS by Meredith Etherington-Smith and Jeremy Pilcher. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, \$17.95. Lucy and Elinor Sutherland were born in the 1860s, with a heritage of aristocratic British ancestry (possibly gilded a bit by their extraordinary grandmother) and no money worth mentioning. Equipped with beauty, talent, and intelligence and unencumbered by formal education, they devised their separate routes to success. Elinor, an admitted romantic, became the novelist Elinor Glyn, while the less ethereal Lucy flourished as the couturière "Lucile." It is intriguing to discover, in this joint biography, that the romantic had the greater survival power. Lucile was unable to cope with the fashion changes following the First World War. Elinor Glyn went to Hollywood and did rather well with, among other things, her proclamation of "It." (She did not invent that term for exceptional charm; the authors have discovered an earlier use of it by, of all people, Kipling.) Ms. Etherington-Smith, a fashion expert, and Mr. Pilcher, a former banker, have worked well together to reconstruct a world in which well-born women were expected to do nothing at all but could, if they chose, do practically anything short of stealing the crown jewels.

SHADES OF GRAY by Timothy R. O'Neill. Viking, \$17.95. Lieutenant Colonel O'Neill has taught at West Point and brings much Academy detail, gingery dialogue, and rank-pulling abrasiveness to a novel that is otherwise strictly for the spook trade. The tale demands a liking for Lovecraft and a penchant for Poe, and would have been the better for an obeisance to Onions.

HOW I GREW by Mary McCarthy. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, \$16.95. Ms. McCarthy's cool recollections of her youthful introduction to books, ideas, and sex give the impression that she is writing about somebody else, as indeed she is. She complains at one point of not knowing this girl, and at another observes of mildly bohemian friends, "I did not really like any of them. . . ." Despite its general air of detachment her memoir is stimulating, because it crackles with provocative opinions stated with brisk elegance.

THE NORTHERN LIGHTS by Howard Norman. Summit, \$16.95. Mr. Norman's novel is set for the most part in the Canadian North, where the adolescent hero lingers in a minute and isolated community of Cree Indians and assorted

Europeans. The appeal of the tale is strong and also indescribable, because the author leaves it to the reader to decide how the rambling events are to be interpreted. Perhaps, basically, the story simply advocates the qualities of tolerance, patience, and cooperation as the foundation of truly civilized society.

DREAMING JUNGLES by Michel Rio. *Pantheon*, \$10.95 and \$6.95. Mr. Rio's narrator is a supercilious, reserved, in truth rather unpleasant French scientist who, in 1913, arrives in Africa to study chimpanzees. The young man is coldly confident of the power of rational intelligence, particularly his own, to control emotions and comprehend events. Africa and a beautiful Englishwoman correct this misapprehension. The novel contrasts sophisticated intellectual argument with the murderous luxuriance of the African wilderness and is altogether an unusual work of fiction.

GENERAL A. P. HILL by James I. Robertson. *Random House*, \$24.95. Ambrose Powell Hill (1825-1865) was one of the Confederacy's better-known and generally successful commanders. He deserves a biography, and Civil War buffs will be grateful to Mr. Robertson for providing a thorough account of his achievements. Outside the army, however, General Hill seems to have been a pleasant gentleman of no particular character, and his honest biographer simply cannot alter that fact.

OLD HUNDREDTH by John Gould. *Norton*, \$14.95. Mr. Gould can always find something new and peculiar to report from the state of Maine, although Maine is probably in fact no zanier than any other place. It is not quite like any other place, however. Where else would a hunter be fined \$100 for "negligently shooting a relative out of season"?

VANISHING IRELAND by Richard Fitzgerald and Edna O'Brien. *Clarkson Potter*, \$19.95. Ms. O'Brien reports on a trip to her native country "of hills and promontories, . . . of stone walls, old oratories, new grottoes, seedy hostels, lonely schoolhouses, laser discos, automatic milking parlours, tufted islands and people ravenous for company." It is a sad text, and Mr. Fitzgerald's expert photographs of glum farmers and roofless cottages support it only too well. Romantic Ireland's dead and gone.

—Phoebe-Lou Adams

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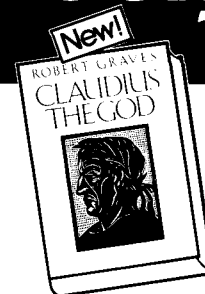


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Answers to the May Puzzles

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Across. 1. G-RANUL-ES (rev.) 5. DRAG(ST)ER (regard rev.) 10. A-GI-N(CO)URT (turn anag.) 11. BEE-R 12. PEG-BOARD 13. SPON(GE (anag. + g) 14. RENDITION (anag.) 18. DE(N-D)AL 19. ESTI-MATED (ties anag.) 22. P-RESIDENTIAL 26. CANTA(loupe)-TAS(ted) 27. RE-(TRACT)ED 28. TOOLED (anag.) 29. SP-HERE 31. ADIT (hidden) 32. SHO(R-TAG)ES 33. ELA-TES (rev.) 34. TIN-SEL(l) **Down.** 1. LOGOG-RAM (rev.) 2. RUB(c) 3. DONA-TE(st) 4. A-QUAR(IS)T 5. DISINTEGRATE (anag.) 6. ANTAGONISTIC (anag.) 7. GENT-LE 8. E(AS-TER EG)G 9. STA(y)-RED 15. ELECT-ROD-E 16. HE-A-D(M)ISTRESS 17. TO-AD-S-TOO-L 20. INSTATED (anag.) 21. PAL(LIAT)E (tail rev.) 23. NEAP TIDE (anag.) 24. INTEGERS (anag.) 25. L-ODES-TAR (art anag.) 30. W(R)EN (new rev.)

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ACROSTIC NO. 22

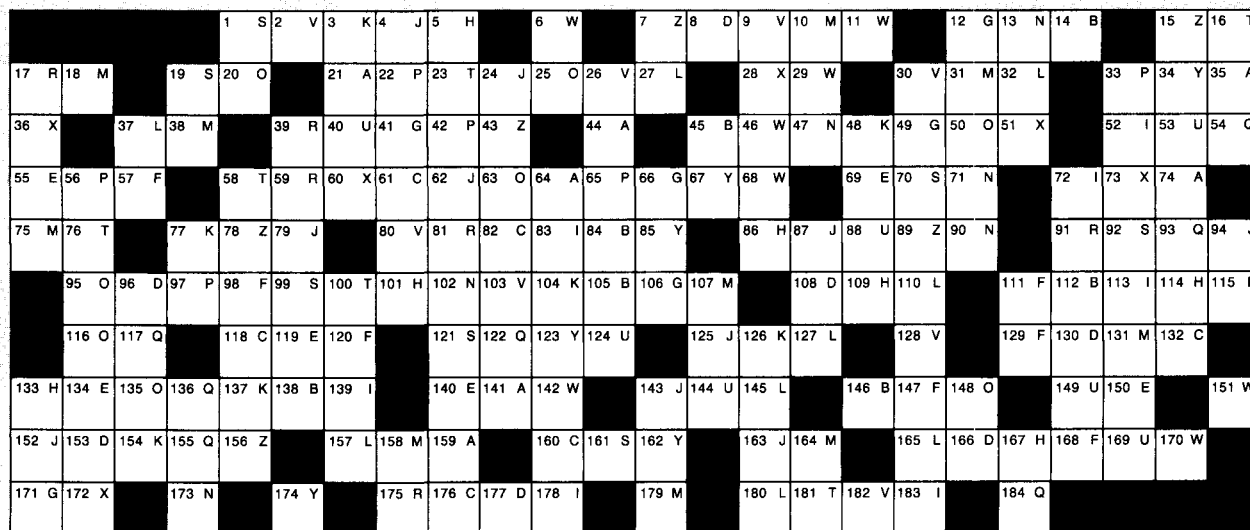
"At a French airport one day, the customs official looked suspiciously at [Alfred] Hitchcock's passport, in which his occupation was listed simply as 'Producer.' 'What do you produce?' [the official] asked. 'Gooseflesh,' Hitchcock replied."

—Clifton Fadiman, (*The Little, Brown Book of*) *Anecdotes*

ACROSTIC No. 23

BY DOROTHY OSBORNE

The letters of clue answers, when put in the appropriately numbered squares, will spell out a quotation. The first letters of clue answers spell the author and source of the quotation.



The solution to Acrostic No. 22 appears on page 83.

A. Menhaden, pilchard or allice shad 44 64 141 21 35 159 74

B. Bridge hand (hyph.) 138 112 84 105 14 146 45

C. Litigation lawyer in Dickens's *Bleak House* 118 160 61 82 176 132

D. Choke cymbals in a rhythm band (2 wds.) 8 130 153 166 96 177 108

E. Belligerent rejoinder (2 wds.) 150 140 69 134 55 119

F. Cinematic movement of 1950s France (2 wds.) 98 57 129 168 147 111 120

G. Character in *The Mikado* (hyph.) 66 49 171 12 41 106

H. Soup popular in the Ukraine 86 167 101 5 114 109 133

I. Tense; jittery 72 52 183 113 139 83 178

J. Fight in a playful way 79 143 87 125 24 163 62 152 94 4

K. Aspire daringly (3 wds.) 154 126 77 104 3 137 48

L. Welsh festival of the arts 115 37 165 27 110 127 145 180 157 32

M. Tennis star from West Germany (2 wds.) 107 18 164 158 38 75 179 10 31 131

N. Plasterwork common in Mediterranean countries 102 90 71 173 47 13

O. Dastard 63 20 135 95 50 116 25 148

P. Asteroid that crosses Earth's orbit 22 56 65 42 97 33

Q. Steve Martin-Lily Tomlin comedy (3 wds.) 184 54 136 122 117 93 155

R. Build a nest 17 59 91 81 175 39

S. Tyro's antithesis (2 wds.) 70 121 19 1 92 161 99

T. Waterway of Nebraska 58 181 16 76 23 100

U. Acrobat's attire 144 169 40 149 53 88 124

V. Inquisition execution (hyph.) 182 26 103 9 30 128 80 2

W. Convict, slangily 29 6 68 11 151 46 142 170

X. Portrayer of Mingo on TV's *Daniel Boone* (2 wds.) 51 36 60 28 172 73

Y. Site of the Dahlak Archipelago (2 wds.) 123 174 162 85 67 34

Z. The New York Cosmos' game 89 78 7 15 43 156

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Continued on next page

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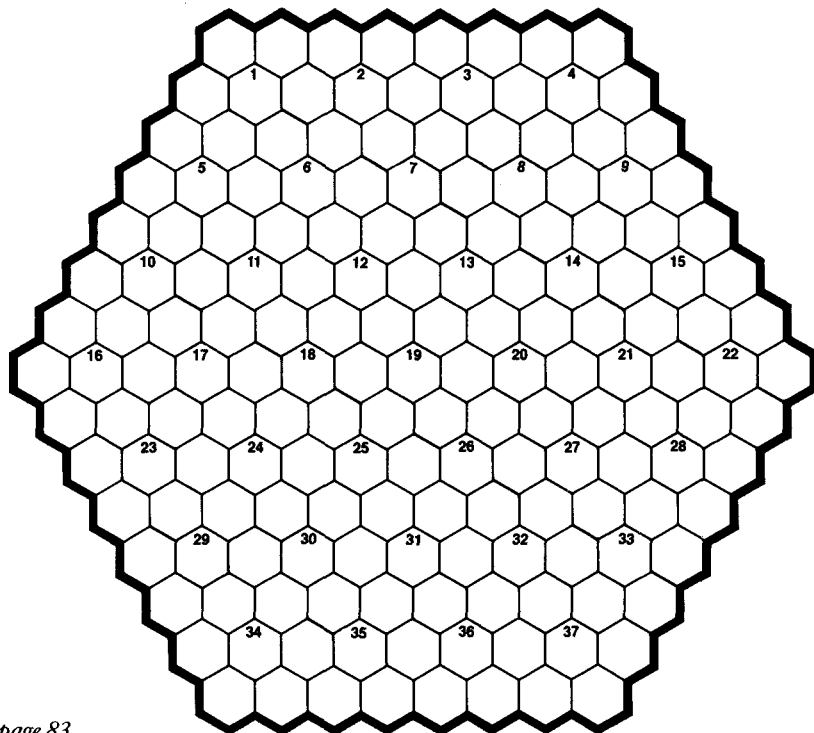
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THE PUZZLER

BY EMILY COX AND HENRY RATHVON

HEX

Clue answers, each seven letters long, are to be entered in sequence, clockwise or counterclockwise, around the appropriately numbered cells; one of each answer's seven letters must be removed to its central, numbered cell. Neighboring answers should help to establish where to begin and which letter to remove in each case. Letters belonging in the 42 cells forming the border spell out a riddle of nine words and its three-word answer, starting in the top left cell. As an additional check, the letters in the 37 numbered cells can be arranged to spell: I REPEAT MERLIN'S INCANTATION: I-HUNGA, U-DUNGA. Answers include six proper words.



The answers to last month's Puzzler appear on page 83.

CLUES

- | | | |
|--|--|--|
| 1. Laugh at wicker from a midwestern state | 13. Republican caught in tie to New York crime | 25. See dumb punk lost in thought |
| 2. Alpine feature picture about sick cow | 14. Wizard's associate is terribly hot in boat | 26. Identify outside of boat drifting in marsh (<i>two words</i>) |
| 3. Around one, throw a card game | 15. Appendix, in rodent, provides power | 27. Define "axle," "pin that's spun" |
| 4. Light-hearted lad pocketing horseshoe and bug | 16. Indefinite number in famous designer's water bed | 28. Hot iron left in cheese |
| 5. Frost from the east engulfed Arabian land | 17. Prohibition still I set aside for dinner | 29. Saying something sweet after promise falls short |
| 6. Engineer sees dim ends | 18. Qualified return of Italian isle, in conclusion | 30. Take a meal, including check, in robbery |
| 7. Ceremony includes clairvoyance break | 19. Do Bogey badly in parting speech (<i>hyphenated</i>) | 31. Tuesday, favorite broadcast brought back dance music (<i>hyphenated</i>) |
| 8. Ted's old mongrel walks with difficulty | 20. Witch, upon adopting former shape | 32. Beginning pole climb |
| 9. Sue holds loot doctored and sold illegally | 21. Confidential chatter about one volume | 33. Norse name perfume for American writer |
| 10. Shellac new counter | 22. Restraining canine crooner | 34. Piano music fad grips Timothy |
| 11. Search among twenty-four sheets of paper | 23. Town takes many, many years to develop | 35. As new as renovated Welsh port |
| 12. Poison ruined nice day | 24. Runner, embarrassed about time, hemmed | 36. Polish saint's picture in Italian stream |
| | | 37. Taking gamble in jet's speed results in tragedy |

Note: The instructions above are for this month's puzzle only. It is assumed that you know how to decipher clues. For a complete introduction to clue-solving, send an addressed, stamped envelope to The Atlantic Puzzler, 8 Arlington Street, Boston, Mass. 02116.

WORD WATCH

BY ANNE H. SOUKHANOV

agita *noun*, acid indigestion: "He wrote funny songs. . . . One was about cooking scungilli, or conch, an Italian delicacy. Another was about the acid indigestion, *agita*, that can afflict those who indulge in too much good Italian food" (*New York Times*). "No wonder Christopher Columbus sailed to America—why get *agita* with Alitalia?" (*Adweek*).

BACKGROUND: Our earliest citation for *agita* is a 1982 article in *The New York Times* in which Arthur Perfall, a spokesman for the MTA, was quoted thus: "Boring, maybe, but nice. . . . No running around, no *agita*. Nice." Professor Luigi Ballerini, of the Department of Italian at New York University, believes that *agita*, an Italian-American word, comes from the Italian *acidità*, a technical term meaning "acidity." Apparently, the word is gaining popularity: "Enid is going to give them such *agita*! I would tell them to change their telephone number and not give her the new one," Carol Burnett said in the February 20, 1984, issue of *People*, forecasting events on the soap opera *All My Children*. In Woody Allen's *Broadway Danny Rose*, an entertainer speaks of "*agita* in the panza," which can be translated as "acid in the paunch." *Agita* is pronounced ăj'·ī·tə.

bodywash *verb*, to conceal the circumstances surrounding the death in combat of a member of the armed forces in an officially noncombatant country, by transporting the body to another country or area and then fabricating a fatal accident: "These roles created a problem when personnel were killed while on secret missions in non-combatant nations, said a former officer assigned to the CIA to plan such missions. The solution, said the former officer . . . was *bodywashing*. He explained, 'If a guy was killed on a mission . . . we'd ship the body back home and have a Jeep roll over on him at Fort Huachuca'" (*Philadelphia Inquirer*).

Here are a few of the words being tracked by the editors of The American Heritage Dictionary, published by Houghton Mifflin. A new word that exhibits sustained use over time may eventually make its way into the dictionary.

BACKGROUND: The *Inquirer* citation, from a 1984 piece by Frank Greve, a national correspondent for Knight-Ridder, is our sole example of the word's use in print to date. The writer referred to the combat deaths of U.S. soldiers which were alleged to be occurring in Nicaragua and El Salvador. Mr. Greve says that the word actually goes back as far as the 1960s. His sources indicate that *bodywashing* occurred during the Vietnam War, when it was felt necessary to remove the remains of American servicemen from politically sensitive countries such as Laos and Cambodia. The same source quoted in the citation also mentioned that helicopter crashes were sometimes engineered as part of the *bodywashing* process: "We'd arrange a chopper crash, or wait until one happened and insert a body or two into the wreckage later. It's not that difficult."

dink or **DINK** *acronym*, a childless, two-career couple: "Just because they're *dinks* doesn't mean they're better educated or better placed in the work force. . . . A *dink* couple can consist of a blue-collar husband and a wife employed in a secretarial position. But, between them, they make substantially more than the average family income" (*Los Angeles Times*).

BACKGROUND: *Dink*, an acronym that emerged during the last few months of 1986, stands for "double income, no kids." Its coiner is unknown; however, the sources of the citations indicate that it may very well have been spawned in the field of advertising or demographics. According to our evidence, *dinks* have certain distinguishing characteristics: the women usually retain their maiden names, the couples are very career-oriented, the husband is likely to cook the

meals, and they usually own property in an upscale locale. Tom O'Sullivan, an advertising executive, is quoted in our *Los Angeles Times* citation as saying, "*Dink* is just a great word. . . . It's like a good dirty joke. It makes it from coast to coast in seconds."

greenfly *noun*, one of a group of devoted baseball fans who follow major-league players in hopes of meeting them, getting autographs, and enjoying attention from the media: "He's an outsider, a member of that small but dogged band of hangers-on that hovers around players' entrances and hotel lobbies. . . . [Players] speak disparagingly of this pesky breed as '*greenflies*,' referring to the species that is soft-bodied, pear-shaped and gathers in colonies" (*Boston Globe*).

BACKGROUND: The word *greenfly*, meaning an aphid, specifically the green peach aphid, has been around for more than 240 years. The word can also refer to other insects, such as the bluebottle or the blowfly, in certain dialects. But according to Peter Gammons, a senior writer for *Sports Illustrated*, the word in its extended sense, classed as professional baseball players' vernacular, has been current only for the past ten years. He has no idea who first used the term in this manner.

sug *acronym*, chiefly British, to attempt to sell (products) in person or by telephone while pretending to be engaged only in market research: "It would be surprising if at some time or other you had not been *sugged*. It can happen in the street, even in your own home. It is the action of unscrupulous salesmen, or worse, capturing your attention by posing as market research interviewers" (*Financial Times*).

BACKGROUND: All of our evidence for the acronym *sug* so far comes from British publications. It is derived from the phrase "to sell under the guise of market research."



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